

Israeli planes raid Hizbollah positions

SIDON (AFP) — Israeli warplanes staged a raid on suspected Hizbollah positions in the Iqlim Al Touffah hills in southern Lebanon on Saturday, Lebanese police said. There were no immediate reports of casualties. Police said two fighter-bombers fired missiles at suspected Hizbollah positions near Aqmata and Jabal Rafih across from the central part of the Israeli-occupied "security zone" in southern Lebanon. The air raid followed a claim by the Iranian- and Syrian-backed Hizbollah that its militants had conducted a bomb attack Saturday against an Israeli patrol near Sojoud in the buffer zone. The Israeli-ally South Lebanon Army (SLA) denied that any such bomb attack had taken place but said five mortar rounds had landed on the village of Wadi Jezzeine in the Jezzeine area under its control, causing some damage.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية تصدر بالإنجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية - الراي.

King Fahd receives Prince Abdullah

AMMAN (J.T.) — King Fahd of Saudi Arabia received HRH Prince Abdullah on Saturday, the official Saudi news agency SPA reported. Prince Abdullah delivered to King Fahd a message of greetings from His Majesty King Hussein, who is undergoing treatment in the United States. Prince Abdullah was accompanied at the meeting by Their Royal Highnesses Prince Faisal and Prince Ghazi. Earlier Saturday, Their Royal Highnesses met with Saudi Minister of Interior Prince Nayef Ben Abdul Aziz who inquired about King Hussein's health. They also discussed bilateral relations and means to boost them further in all fields, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported. Their Royal Highnesses arrived in Saudi Arabia upon an invitation from Prince Abdul Aziz Ben Abdullah Ben Abdul Aziz.

Volume 24 Number 7018

AMMAN SUNDAY, DECEMBER 13, 1998, SHA'ABAN 24, 1419

Price: Jordan 200 fils

House panel approves fourth impeachment article

WASHINGTON (R) — The House Judiciary Committee on Saturday approved a fourth and final article of impeachment against President Bill Clinton which charges that he abused the power of his office. The article was approved on a party line vote of 21-16. The four articles of impeachment now go to the full House of Representatives for a vote next week. If the House approves any article, it will trigger only the second Senate trial in U.S. history to determine if a president should be removed from office (See earlier story on page 5).

Lebanese MPs to debate new government's programme

BEIRUT (AFP) — Lebanese MPs will debate the programme of the new government of Prime Minister-delegate Salim Hoss on Monday, state television reported. Hoss presented his programme to MPs Friday and will seek a formal vote of confidence in his government. Hoss has vowed that the new slimmed-down government of "terrier technocrats" he named on Dec. 4 will move quickly to introduce sorely needed economic and political reforms.

EU Mideast envoy in Syria for talks

DAMASCUS (AFP) — Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Al Sharaa met here Saturday with the European Union (EU) envoy to the Middle East, Miguel Angel Moratinos, for discussions on the Arab-Israeli peace process. Officials said the two also discussed the "importance of strengthening Syrian-European relations." Peace talks between Syria and Israel have been suspended for three years.

Egyptian MP punished by colleagues

CAIRO (AFP) — The Egyptian parliament has decided to punish one of its members who refused to pay his phone bill in a hotel. Mohammad Awad Ebeid will be banned for twenty sessions and lose his attendance pay for that period. He will also be unable to take part in parliamentary visits abroad. Ebeid ran into trouble in the Mediterranean city of Alexandria where he refused to pay a \$300 hotel phone bill.

Gemayel delays return home

BEIRUT (AFP) — Former Lebanese President Amin Gemayel has put off plans to return home because he risks criminal action over allegations he had contact with Israelis, a crime under Lebanese law. Gemayel said in a statement received here that the Lebanese embassy in France, where he has been in exile for 10 years, had sent him an official letter informing him he faced judicial action "for having met Israelis."

24 killed in Brazil fireworks blast

SAO PAULO (AFP) — The death toll in the explosion of a fireworks factory has risen at least 24, Brazilian authorities said Saturday. At least 50 other people were injured in the blast Friday in the northeastern town of San Antonio de Jesus. Authorities said the factory had explosive powder and products stored in 10 different warehouses around town, and that three of these exploded when they happened to be a lot of people around.

West Bank clashes continue just hours before Clinton arrival

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Violent clashes between Palestinians and Israeli troops rocked the West Bank again Saturday just hours before the arrival of U.S. President Bill Clinton for a historic visit to the region. Palestinians rallying in Bethlehem to demand the release of Palestinian prisoners hurled rocks at Israeli troops, who fired back with rubber-coated metal bullets, witnesses said.

Five Palestinians were hit, including a policeman who tried to stop protesters from approaching Israeli positions. In another clash near the Jewish settlement of Beit El, north of the Palestinian self-rule city of Ramallah, five Palestinians were also injured by rubber-coated metal bullets fired by Israeli troops, witnesses said. Meanwhile Israeli radio reported that an Israeli border guard was wounded after a protester hit him with a rock near the village of Al Khader, south of Bethlehem.

Four Palestinians have been killed and several hundred injured during three weeks of almost daily clashes as Palestinians have been protesting Israel's refusal to release more Palestinian political prisoners as part of the U.S.-brokered Wye River accord.

In Gaza City on Saturday several hundred Palestinians demonstrated within sight of the conference centre where Clinton is to make a historic address Monday to the Palestinian leadership — the highlight of a three-day visit to Israel and the Palestinian territories which was due to begin after midnight Saturday.

Several men wearing masks walked through the crowd, one waving an axe, and two others sat atop a pillar ringed with barbed wire symbolising the plight of the Palestinians held by Israel. "Clinton, Free Our Prisoners" chanted the crowd, which included relatives of

some of the 2,400 political activists who have been on hunger strike to press for their release. "We don't want a port, we don't want an airport, we want our prisoners freed," they chanted, referring to clauses in the Wye River accord which led to last month's opening of a Gaza airport and foresees the creation of a seaport.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has accused the Palestinian National Authority of instigating the violence and has in response frozen further troop withdrawals from the West Bank called for by the Wye accord. Under the Wye accord, Israel agreed to release 750 of the some 3,000 Palestinians in its jails. But when a first batch was freed last month, only 100 were political detainees and the rest were common criminals.

(Continued on page 12)

Damascus meeting highlights split in Palestinian opposition

DAMASCUS (AFP) — The Palestinian opposition split Saturday over what line to take towards the PLO and the peace process as Palestinian President Yasser Arafat prepared to host the first ever visit to the Palestinian territories by a U.S. president.

The leader of one of the two main secular opposition factions walked out of a combined opposition meeting here that had been intended to overshadow President Bill Clinton's landmark visit to Gaza City in support of the peace process Monday.

"We are not a single party — there are disagreements," Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) leader Nayef Hawatmeh told reporters after walking out.

"We have been conducting the armed struggle for 25 years and sacrificed thousands of martyrs, while there are forces at this congress who have not fired a

shot at the Israeli enemy," Hawatmeh complained.

The DFLP leader spoke out despite efforts to silence him by hardliners who accused him of seeking to "sabotage" the opposition's two-day "general national congress" here.

"Those who want to sabotage our advance and support Yasser Arafat have only to go and join him," said Ahmad Jibril, head of the rejectionist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine — General Command (PFLP-GC).

"We cannot accept people having one foot in Arafat's camp and another in ours," he said.

Hawatmeh had objected to a call made at the congress opening session Saturday for the opposition to set up a rival Palestine Liberation Organisation and to hold elections for a Palestinian parliament-in-exile to rival that led by Arafat.

(Continued on page 12)

'Israeli Arab parties want Netanyahu ousted'

CAIRO (R) — A leading Israeli Arab politician said on Saturday Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government had failed and should be replaced by one serious about peace with the Palestinians and Israel's Arab neighbours.

"The government of Benjamin Netanyahu will not stay in power because of its huge political, social and economic failures," Knesset member Abdul Wahab Darawshe told reporters in Cairo after meeting Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa.

"The Israeli right wing itself lost trust [in the government]," he added. "It considers Netanyahu's approval of the Wye [land-for-peace] agreement as a betrayal and that he should be punished and brought down," Darawshe said his

Democratic Arab Party along with other Israeli Arab parties, representing 15 per cent of the Knesset, wanted parliament dissolved to make way for early elections.

"I demand this government be brought down for the peace process to continue with another government that wants peace."

"The Arab parties in Israel support the Labour Party in the next elections because it offers concessions in the peace process and withdrawal from the [Syrian] Golan Heights and southern Lebanon," he said.

Last Monday Netanyahu saved his shaky government with a procedural play that put off a vote in Israel's 120-seat parliament to oust him from office.

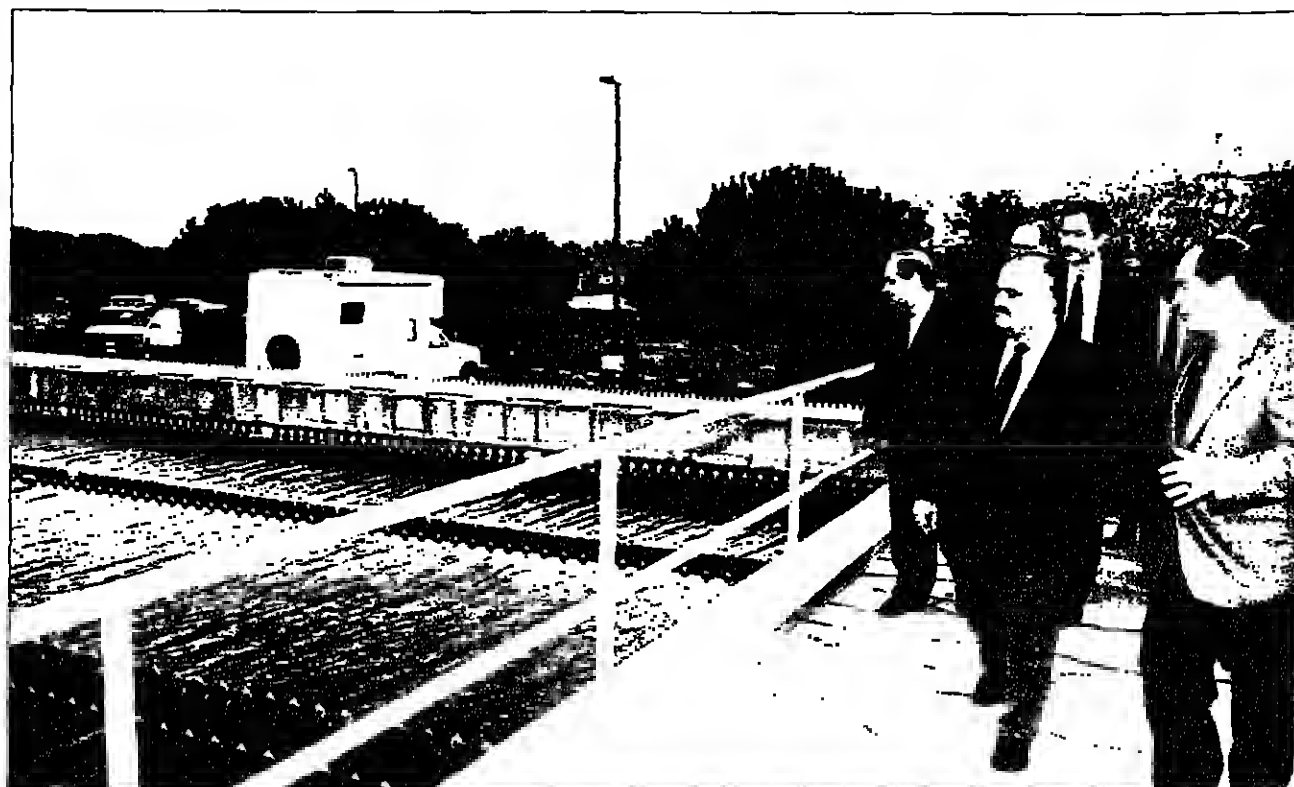
Premier meets with Arafat

GAZA (Petra) — Prime Minister Faysal Tarawneh on Saturday paid a short visit to Gaza to convey a verbal message from His Majesty King Hussein and His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, to President Yasser Arafat.

At a press conference, Tarawneh said his talks with Arafat and senior Palestinian officials, which included bilateral issues, the recent developments of the peace process and the implementation of the Wye Accord, were positive and constructive. The premier said the two sides will continue their contacts and coordination, adding that the visit "came as part of Jordan's support to the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) because our destiny is one."

Arafat said the issue of Palestinian political prisoners held by Israel was one of the main topics tackled by the two sides, paying tribute to the Kingdom's efforts to resolve the matter. Tarawneh expressed hope that efforts to free the Palestinian prisoners would continue "because their cause is just."

(Continued on page 12)



HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, on Saturday tours Zai Water Treatment Plant facilities along with senior officials

National water strategy should be based on comprehensive studies, Regent says

AMMAN (Petra) — HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, Saturday called on the concerned authorities to base the national water strategy on comprehensive studies taking into consideration the demographic and geographic factors of the Kingdom.

In remarks he made during a visit to the Zai Water Treatment Plant, Prince Hassan said a water strategy should be effective, enabling the country to utilise its available water resources and provide sufficient water supplies to the public.

Prince Hassan said efficient alternatives for the equitable distribution of water should be considered. Emphasising the need to wisely manage existing water resources and search for new

resources, Prince Hassan said it is also necessary to deal with the water issue in a manner that would achieve integration between the environment and energy. This, he said, is a main prerequisite for sound planning and would thus guarantee the best results.

After touring the different sections of the water plant and listening to a briefing on recent measures to ensure the delivery of potable water to the public, the Regent praised the Water Authority of Jordan's efforts and its drive to ensure effective solutions to guarantee good quality water supplies.

The Regent said an integrated database was necessary to provide information about water and other natural resources to the public, partic-

ularly the farmers who could thus take appropriate decisions concerning their crop production.

At the outset of the tour, Prince Hassan listened to a briefing by Minister of Water and Energy Hani Mulki and the plant's director about steps taken in treating the water supplies and ensuring that the water pumped to the public is pure and conforming to the set specifications.

Mulki highlighted plans for developing the Zai plant, financed by the U.S. Agency for International Development, saying that the most up-to-date techniques are being employed in treating the water through several stages in order to ensure its conformity with required specifications.

Mulki said the plant conducts nearly 22,000 tests every month to ensure water safety and purity. He also talked about the plant's \$300 million 10-year plan, to be funded by the U.S., to double the current plant's capacity.

The Regent also listened to a briefing on a strategy for developing the Kingdom's water resources in general and the Disi water basin project in particular.

The Regent was accompanied on the tour by Chief of the Royal Court Jawad Anani, HRH Prince Ra'd Ben Zeid, the chief chamberlain, Information Minister Naser Judeh and U.S. Ambassador to Jordan William Burns as well as the director of USAID and several other officials.

Iraqi minister says UNSCOM inspectors can enter Baath offices on condition

BAGHDAD (AP) — An Iraqi cabinet minister intervened Saturday in the dispute over a U.N. bid to inspect the Baath Party offices, saying such an inspection could take place if the owners granted permission.

The offices of the ruling party that 12 U.N. inspectors tried to enter Wednesday was a "private house," Culture and Information Minister Humam Abdul Khaliq told reporters.

"Just like a house, if the owner allows them in, we [the government] have no objection," A Baath Party official

denied the inspectors' access to the building in the Adhamiya district of Baghdad, saying they had to submit a written request for what they were seeking.

On Thursday, a party leader, Latif Nsayyif Jassim, said the inspectors would never be allowed to enter as the offices did not contain materials relevant to their search.

Chief U.N. inspector Richard Butler accused the Iraqis of blocking an "absolutely legal" inspection and said the offices contained "materials of significance."

Speaking at the Journalists' Association in Bag-

dad, Khaliq said the party offices did not belong to the government.

"We have no say [the inspectors] can enter or not," he said.

His remarks were seen as a government bid to distance itself from the Baath Party's refusal to let the inspectors enter.

U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen has said that Iraq's denial of access created a "very serious situation," which could prompt a no-notice military attack by the United States.

Meanwhile, U.N. inspectors in at least five vehicles went out into the

field Saturday for one of their last missions in the current round of searches for Iraq's illegal weapons.

U.N. spokeswoman Caroline Cross refused to reveal the inspectors' destinations, saying only they were conducting "their normal daily duties."

Unconfirmed reports said the teams would visit sensitive sites such as the defence industry's headquarters or offices related to national security.

Neither the United Nations nor the Iraqi government would comment on the report.

(Continued on page 3)

NATO chief pays tribute to Kingdom's regional role, expresses hope for further cooperation

By Caroline Faraj

AMMAN — Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) Javier Solana praised Jordan's role in contributing to security and stability in the Middle East, and expressed hope for more cooperation with the organisation through the Mediterranean dialogue.

"I think that Jordan, which [has been] a member of the Mediterranean dialogue with NATO since 1995, has played a role in contributing to security and stability in the Middle East region," Solana told the Jordan

Times at NATO headquarters in Brussels last Wednesday.

"We are trying to offer assistance and help to the members of the Mediterranean dialogue, which includes Jordan," said Secretary General Solana. In specific he said the Mediterranean countries have been invited to participate in activities such as science, information and civil emergency planning, and to take part in NATO courses on peacekeeping, arms control and verification; the responsibilities of military forces with regard to environmental protection; civil emer-

gency planning; and NATO European security cooperation.

He explained the dialogue which was launched in 1994, after inviting Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Mauritania, Israel and then Jordan, aims to contribute to security and stability in the Mediterranean, to enhance mutual understanding, and to correct misperceptions about NATO among the members of the dialogue.

Solana conceded that the purpose of that dialogue is not clear yet, and therefore the Mediterranean countries were at first hesitant in approaching NATO to join

the dialogue.

"Probably it is true that we both, the Mediterranean countries and NATO, have to make an effort to understand each other better," said Solana.

He also stressed the importance of enhancing relations between the Mediterranean countries and Europe.

"The most important relationship that your countries may have with the European countries is through the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, which has a wider scope than us," Solana said. "NATO comes second after the EU and can do a lot," he

said, noting that the organisation can "give added value to the process in the security field."

But Solana expressed his dissatisfaction with the achievements between NATO and the Mediterranean countries to date.

"Frankly speaking, we haven't gone far enough. We are prepared and we have to go further, but we also need your countries to have the will to go further," said Solana.

He said NATO is arranging another seminar in Spain in February 1999.

(Continued on page 3)

Algerian Islamist leader seeks release from U.S. jail

Suspect faces deportation based on 'secret evidence'

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Lawyers for a leader of Algeria's Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) argued Friday for their client's immediate release from jail as an immigration judge considers an appeal to a deportation ruling.

Lawyers for Anwar Haddam filed a habeas corpus application in a federal court in Virginia challenging the legality of their client's imprisonment and the use of classified information to keep him in custody.

Haddam, who faces deportation from the United States, was arrested in 1996, three years after applying for political asylum. The U.S. Immigration and Naturalisation Service (INS) maintains that he should be denied asylum on

grounds that he "incited others to commit acts of persecution" in the bloody civil conflict in Algeria. The INS claim is based on secret evidence alleging that Haddam's release would present a national security threat to the United States.

District Court Judge T.S. Ellis said he was reluctant to rule on the constitutionality of using secret evidence in immigration proceedings. Without rendering a decision, he urged the Department of Justice and Haddam's lawyers to cooperate in order to find a third country willing to take him in.

Defence attorney Malea Kihlan argued that as long as Haddam is held in INS custody, no country will accept him because his continued detention has "creat-

ed an appearance of criminality." Government prosecutors countered that they would release Haddam only if he withdraws his request for political asylum.

Haddam is one of 25 people currently facing removal from the United States based on secret evidence neither they nor their attorneys can see.

The cases were brought after Congress passed the 1996 Anti-Terrorism Act, which permits the use of secret evidence to deport individuals deemed to present a threat to national security. Civil rights groups have argued that admitting classified evidence in court prevents the mounting of an effective legal defence. Some have also accused INS of selectively targeting Arabs since all of the secret

evidence cases involve Arab immigrants.

Haddam, who was elected to the Algerian parliament in 1991, fled the country after a military coup plunged Algeria into a civil war which has claimed more than 60,000 lives, according to international estimates.

Since then, he has acted as leader of the FIS parliamentary delegation in exile, frequently taking part in international conferences and meetings with European and U.S. officials, according to his wife Nassima.

Haddam's case is simultaneously being considered by an immigration judge who is expected to rule on his political asylum application by the end of the month.

Turkish President Demirel backs Ecevit's minority government plan

Unions warn of unrest over lay-off threats

ANKARA (R) — Turkish President Suleyman Demirel has backed a bid by leftist Bulent Ecevit to set up a minority government amid political stalemate and dark clouds over the economy, newspapers said on Saturday.

Turkey has not had a stable government since 1995. Any new administration formed by Prime Minister-designate Ecevit is likely to be only temporary because elections have been set by parliament for next April.

Demirel said Ecevit's plans to form a minority government from members of his own Democratic Left Party were valid as long as the cabinet won a confidence vote in parliament.

"One party or lots of parties, what's important is the vote of confidence," the Milliyet daily quoted him as

saying. "A government is a government as long as it wins the vote."

Conservative leader Mesut Yilmaz's minority coalition was toppled last month on corruption allegations. The latest political crisis comes as world financial troubles have triggered large scale lay-offs in Turkey.

The country's top trade unionist warned on Saturday of strife if industrialists made good on threats to make thousands of workers redundant, particularly in the automobile sector.

"Leaving workers at the factory gate could lead to a social explosion," Turkish labour confederation leader Bayram Meral told a union conference.

Yilmaz's caretaker cabinet on Friday unveiled measures to shield the economy. The government is to increase

the capital of Turkey's export-import bank Eximbank to boost stagnant exports through cheap loans.

Turkish banks and financial institutions are to be exempted from a six per cent Resource Utilisation and Support Fund charge in their foreign borrowings.

A leading business group warned last week that the economy could plunge into crisis due to a lack of political leadership ahead of the polls.

Veteran Ecevit has had little success so far in persuading secularist leaders to support his minority government proposal, which would keep the main opposition Islamists from power.

Personal rivalries and factional fights splinter Turkey's national assembly and many MPs have their eyes on reelection, not legis-

lation. Parliament has passed only two bills in the last two months.

The Islam-based Virtue Party, the biggest grouping in parliament, predicted Ecevit would fail.

"It's not possible for Ecevit to get anywhere with his minority government formula," Anatolia news agency quoted Virtue leader Recai Kutan as saying.

Most secularist politicians have steered clear of the Islamists since the influential army engineered their fall from power in June 1997 after a stormy year in office.

The generals this month told the Islamists not to draw them into politics in a communique that reminded the politicians that the army was closely monitoring the government chaos.



PREPARATIONS FOR CLINTON VISIT: An Israeli soldier, armed with an M-16 and a hand grenade, stands guard Saturday near a banner welcoming U.S. President Bill Clinton to the Palestinian territories in the West Bank town of Bethlehem. Clinton is due to visit Bethlehem Dec. 15 (AFP photo)

Cairo court sentences three brothers to death

CAIRO (AP) — A Cairo criminal court on Saturday sentenced three brothers to death for killing a teenager with daggers and machetes then licking his blood in front of bystanders, court sources said.

Reading out the verdict during a five-minute session at the Criminal Court, Judge Wasfi Nashed said the three men deserved the severest punishment "but the law does not have a stronger punishment than a death sentence."

In Egypt, the verdict and sentencing are announced simultaneously. Executions are usually by hanging.

It was not clear if the three men plan to appeal. The brothers, Omar, Abu Bakr and Osman Al Sayed, stabbed to death 19-year old Khaled Mohammad on a street in a poor Cairo neighbourhood in June 1997.

Then they cut his flesh with daggers and machetes and licked the blood from his body while threatening stunned bystanders with the same fate.

Police said the brothers, who were wanted for several other unspecified crimes, were seeking revenge against Mohammad, whose father had reported their two other brothers to police for robbing his apartment.

Iraq marks Uday's escape from death

BAGHDAD (AP) — Two years ago this day, two men approached a sports car in the wealthy Mansour district of Baghdad and asked it with machine gun fire.

Amid the panic and confusion in the streets the assailants escaped, unaware that their victim, Uday Hussein, had survived, although with grievous injuries. Uday, President Saddam Hussein's eldest son and then his heir apparent, was shot about 10 times and remained in hospital for six months before

appearing in public. To mark the second anniversary of his narrow escape, Iraq is holding day-long, nationwide celebrations Saturday.

The biggest festivities will be held in Baghdad, especially on the street intersection where on Dec. 12, 1996 a bloodied Uday had lain slumped in his car, only 500 metres from an intelligence headquarters.

A huge tent has been set up at the site where Iraqi singers will perform later Saturday. Earlier in the day, members

of the Journalists Association, which Uday heads, unveiled a statue of Saddam and slaughtered two sheep in a traditional Arab form of celebration.

Uday, 34, has regained his health but still walks with the help of a cane, a reminder of the bullets that had shattered his leg.

Prior to the assassination attempt, Uday held considerable power in Iraq. He is known to be a close confidant of his father and had previously run the trade and informa-

tion ministries. He owns and runs the influential Babel newspaper and Youth television, the most popular TV station in Iraq.

He is also a patron saint of local sports, heading the Iraqi Olympic Committee and the national soccer federation — positions which gained him popularity among many Iraqis.

Separate festivities are being held Saturday by students, sports associations and the Saddam Commandos Organization, founded by Uday.

United States faces up to prospect of an independent Palestinian state

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The United States is leaving the door open to a Palestinian state, conscious that its creation may be inevitable while hoping that Israel will some day consent to its birth.

Seven months after U.S. First Lady Hillary Clinton spoke out in favour of a Palestinian state, President Bill Clinton is set to pay a visit to Gaza on Monday, in what some see as a calculated move by the United States to become engaged on the issue of Palestinian nation-building.

Officially, Clinton is going to Gaza, the headquarters of the Palestinian National Authority, as part of a deal he made under the Wye River land-for-security agreement signed here on Oct. 23.

Palestinian President Yasser Arafat agreed to convene a meeting of a Palestinian assembly to scrap anti-Israeli clauses in the charter after Clinton offered to speak at the gathering.

But the one-day trip, replete with all the trappings of a state visit, is bound to have a broader impact as it marks the first time that Clinton will have an opportunity to speak directly to the Palestinians about their long-held dream for a country.

It is also seen as a U.S. show of support for Arafat, who has agreed to a crackdown on activists under the Wye accord.

At the least, the presidential visit to Gaza reflects a U.S. recognition of the Palestinians'

distinctiveness from the Israelis.

Combined with other steps by the administration to elevate relations with the Palestinians, the trip highlights a shift in the U.S. approach to the Middle East, where Israel remains its closest ally.

For some observers, the shift stems from a U.S. realisation that an independent Palestinian state is the logical outcome of the Middle East peace process.

"This baby is being born. It is in the womb," says James Zogby, the president of the Arab American Institute.

"The United States now understands that statehood is inevitable," he says.

While the U.S. State Department has not taken any official position on the creation of a Palestinian state, it opposes any unilateral declaration of statehood, arguing that the Palestinians must negotiate their status with Israel.

That position supposes that the United States would steer clear from recognising a Palestinian state that had not received some form of approval from Israel.

It was Hillary Clinton who sparked controversy over possible U.S. recognition of a Palestinian state when she said, while on a trip in Switzerland in May, that an independent country for the Palestinians would be in the long-term interests of the Middle East.

The administration responded by saying that the first lady did not make policy statements but her remarks were seen as a trial-balloon to test reaction to the stance.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reacted furiously and mobilised Congress to back him in reining in the administration.

Clinton in January once again added oil to the fire when he expressed his hope at a White House meeting with Arafat that "the Palestinians can realise their aspirations to live as a free people."

That statement did not amount to support for a Palestinian state but it was the closest to date by an American president.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 4773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

15:10 Children's French Programme
15:30 Cartoon - Barabas in Pyjamas
16:00 Doc - Life Choices
16:30 Doc - Small Talk
17:00 Doc - Mothers of the Wild
18:15 French Programmes
19:00 Les Yeux d'Helene
19:00 Le Journal
19:15 French Programme
19:30 News headlines
19:35 Comedy - Step by Step
20:00 What Would You Do?
20:30 Drama - Tom Jones
21:05 Doc - You and Your Car
21:30 UN Cut
22:00 News in English
22:30 Lonesome Dove
23:10 Feature film - "Ice Pave"
00:30 End of TX.

PRAYER TIMES

04:59 Fajr
06:22 (Sunrise) Duha
11:30 Dhuhur
14:14 Asr
16:37 Maghreb
18:00 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweifeh, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel.

4622366

Anglican Church Tel.

4624853/4624811.

St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox

Church Tel. 4771751.

Amman International Church

Tel. 5865897

German-speaking Evangelical

Congregation Tel. 5688404

The Evangelical Local Church

in Amman Tel. 5811295

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter

Day Saints Tel. 4654932

St. John the Baptist at De la

Salle College Tel. 5661757

Church of the Annunciation

Tel. 4637440

Greek Orthodox Church Tel.

4646138

Church of Presentation, Swe-

ifeh Tel. 5920146

The United Catholic Church

Tel. 4624757

The English-Language

Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190

Evangelical Free Church Tel.

4892679

The Baptist Church Tel.

4628052

The Armenian Catholic

Church Tel. 4771331

The American Orthodox

Church Tel. 4775261

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Depart-

ment of Meteorology

Temperatures are expected to rise with clouds appearing at different altitudes and winds southeasterly moderate. In Agaba, winds will be northerly moderate, and seas calm.

Amman 07/19

Agaba 13/23

Deserts 05/20

Jordan Valley 13/23

Yesterday's high temperatures:

Amman 16, Agaba 20 Humidity

readings: Amman 45 per cent,

Agaba 48 per cent.

Following are the temperatures

expected today in the following

areas:

Ajloun 04/14

Jerash 06/18

Um Qays 07/18

Madaba 05/17

Petra 06/17

Dead Sea 13/25

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:

Dr. Khalil Tashq 4757253

Dr. Bahjat Bader 532642

Dr. Nasser Ibrahim 530432

Dr. Wafiq Qadhad 4893542

AMMAN:

Firas Pharmacy 5661912

AJ Salam Pharmacy 4636730

Mayadah Pharmacy 5537004

Ruka Al Dawa Pharmacy 5536169

IRBID:

Dr. Ghazi Ta'ameh (02)250080

Fou'ad Pharmacy (02)275360

ZARQA:

Dr. Walid Nabhan (09)3851743

Palestine Pharmacy (09)983562

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 4637111

Civil Defence Department 5661111

Civil Defence Immediate Rescue

4630341

Civil Defence Emergency 199

Rescue Police 192, 4621111, 4637777

Fire Brigade 4617101

Malhas, J. Amman 4636140

Palestine, Shmeisani 5607071

Shmeisani Hospital 5607431

Jordan Hospital 5607550

University Hospital 5353444

Al-Musasher Hospital 5667227/9

Al-Ahli, Abdali 5664164/6

Italian, Al-Mubajreen 4777101/3

Al-Bashir 4775111/2/6

Army, Marja 4891611/5

Queen Alia Hospital 5157100

Amal Hospital 5607155

Al-Amal Cancer Centre 5353000

ZARQA:

Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323

Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560

Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986731

Al Hikma Modern Hospital

Jordan Television 4773111

Radio Jordan 4774111

Water Authority 5680100

J. Electricity Authority 5815615

Electric Power Co. 4636381

RJ Flight Information 44-53200

Queen Alia Int. Airport 44-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:

The Arab Centre for Heart and Special

Surgery 5921199

The Islamic, Abdali 5666131/7

Hussein Medical Centre 5856856

Luzmila 4630195

Khalidi Maternity 4644281/6

Akileh Maternity 4642441/2

Jabal Amman Maternity 4642362

Malhas, J. Amman 4636140

Palestine, Shmeisani 5607071

Shmeisani Hospital 5607431

Jordan Hospital 5607550

University Hospital 5353444

Al-Musasher Hospital 5667227/9

Al-Ahli, Abdali 5664164/6

Italian, Al-Mubajreen 4777101/3

Al-Bashir 4775111/2/6

Army, Marja 4891611/5

Queen Alia Hospital 5157100

Amal Hospital 5607155

Al-Amal Cancer Centre 5353000

ZARQA:

Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323

Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560

Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986731

Al Hikma Modern Hospital

(09)990990

09:00 Beirut (RJ)



HRH Prince Ra'd examines items on display at an exhibition of Iranian goods at Al Hussein Sports City (Petra photo)

Prince Ra'd says Jordan seeks to bolster bilateral relations with Iran

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Prince Ra'd Bin Zeid on Saturday stressed Jordan's readiness to enhance relations with Iran in various fields and said he expected further economic and trade cooperation between the two countries in the near future.

Speaking at the inauguration of an exhibition of Iranian products at Al Hussein Sports City, Prince Ra'd voiced his appreciation of the high quality of Iranian products.

He said Jordan and Iran are now cooperating in religious tourism, the first step towards

promoting bilateral relations.

He added that such an exhibition was a step towards increasing cooperation among "our two countries and peoples."

A total of 300 Iranian companies are taking part in the exhibition, whose proceeds will go to help the handi-

capped.

Also Saturday, a Jordanian-Iranian technical committee opened a meeting in Amman in preparation for a joint ministerial committee meeting here next Tuesday, which will be chaired by the two countries' ministers of trade and industry.

Proposed party's platform to focus on domestic issues

By Francesca Ciriaci

AMMAN — A new centre-left party is slated to be licensed within the next two-three months, according to its founders.

The new group will raise to 21 the number of political parties in the Kingdom, to 16 the number of opposition parties, and to nine the number of leftist parties, including Ba'athists.

Still, even amid mounting scepticism over the effectiveness of the current parties and predictions that an increased number would further dilute their influence, the promoters of the new group believe there is a vacuum to fill in the political arena and maintain that theirs will be "a different party."

"Have you ever walked into a government office to obtain any kind of certificate and were requested to state your 'origins', and then your father and grandfather's place of birth?"

"This is exactly the kind of practices we want to fight," said Mazen Rial, the architect of the envisioned "Jordanian Citizens' Civil Rights Movement Party," already known as Humat, or the Defenders, by its founders.

Rial said the party aspires to become the voice of the oppressed and less privileged people, and counts on gathering "approximately one thousand members" from cities, villages, and refugee camps.

The party's symbol is scheduled to be chosen next week.

Rial, a geological engineer who runs two private businesses, has been a political activist since his youth, and in the 1970s was president of the General Union of Palestinian Students in the former Yugoslavia, where he studied.

At home, he has filled posts in the executive councils of the 30,000-member Jordan Engineers Association and the 80,000-member Union of Professional Associations.

Defeated in the 1997 parliamentary elections, in which he ran for one of the prestigious Third District Muslim seats, Rial did not hesitate to launch accusations of election rigging and vote manipulation against the former government of Abdul Salam Majali, which oversaw the polls.

"But the main problem of all our governments, affecting all aspects of our life



Mazen Rial

and society, is tribalism, which clearly stands in the way of democracy and civil rights," Rial told the Jordan Times on Saturday.

Tribalism produced the one-person, one-vote system that regulated the 1993 and 1997 elections, "transforming the tribes into political units replacing the parties in policy-making, and creating a Parliament totally deprived of any opposition voice."

Humat have also announced plans to fight the controversial 1998 Press and Publications Law, which they describe as "plainly undemocratic, and in flagrant violation of basic

human rights."

On a regional level, the party's platform rejects "all Arab-Israeli accords signed since Madrid and Oslo, down to Wye."

"We want Israeli troops to withdraw from all occupied Arab and Palestinian lands, including the Golan Heights, southern Lebanon, the West Bank, Gaza and Jerusalem, which must become the capital of an independent Palestinian state," Rial said.

"This would only be in implementation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 242 and 338. Once this is done, we can start talking about normalisation."

On the economic level, the new party advocates more measures in favour of the middle and lower classes, stressing that the economic restructuring programme must not be carried out at the expense of the lower-income segments.

"Privatisation should only involve service companies owned by the government, not industries such as phosphates and potash," said Rial.

"And even with service companies, we must be very careful not to allow Israelis to invest in any of them."

WHAT'S GOING ON

EUROPEAN FILM FESTIVAL

- * Spanish film "El Maestro" at 5:00 p.m.
- * French film "Un Air de Famille" at 8:00 p.m. (to be shown again on Monday Dec. 14 at 5:00 p.m.)
- * Italian film "L'albero delle pere" on Monday Dec. 14 at 8:00 p.m.
- * All films, with subtitles in English, are screened at the Royal Cultural Centre.

LECTURE

- * Lecture by Jordanian author Hisham Gharaibeh on his latest novels and on a study by Dr. Nabil Hadad at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh at 6:00 p.m.

PLAY

- * "Barbie and Uncle Ghafel" (in Arabic) at Jabal Al Atrash Cultural Forum, Jerash at 11:00 a.m. (Tel. 6353705)

EXHIBITIONS

- * Exhibition of Nabatean silver jewelry at the Jordan Design and Trade Centre, off Wadi Saqra Street, until Dec. 31 (Tel. 5699141/2).
- * Display of posters marking the anniversary of the International Declaration of Human Rights at the Greater Amman Municipality city hall, Ras Al-Ain, until Dec. 17.
- * "The Warm Winter" — works by several artists at Orfali Art Gallery, Um Uthaina (Tel. 5526932), until Feb. 1.
- * Photography exhibition "Empreintes" (a photography trip from Morocco to Turkey) at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Amman, until Dec. 17.
- * Oil paintings by Ali Najjar at Instituto Cervantes, Jabal Amman, until Dec. 14.
- * The Tenth Anniversary Exhibition of Contemporary Arab Artists at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh (Tel. 4643251/2, until Jan. 28).
- * Photography exhibition entitled "Windows and Doors" by Hani Hourani at Baladna Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5537598), until Dec. 18.



A scene from 'Hades'

'Hades' combines elements of 'intriguing' film

By Dima Hamdan

AMMAN — After a one-week pause, the European Film Festival resumed again last Friday at the Royal Cultural Centre with the Greek film "Hades."

Manos, a well-to-do lawyer, is asked to investigate the disappearance of a woman (Evanthia), who lived at the border of a neighbouring country. In order to carry out his investigation, he quits his secure surroundings and starts a journey that takes him into the unknown. Gradually, he becomes deeply involved in the investigation, not for its original purpose, but because it gives him a chance to go in search of

himself, leading to a descent into the hell of his conscience and questions over his own deeds and motives.

The woman's disappearance is derived from Euripides' tragedy Alceste, in which the heroine sacrifices herself and descends into hell in order to save her husband Admetus, and Heracles wrestles with Death to bring her back to him.

Thus, we sense that "Hades" in this film is represented in multiple forms: both characters have physically travelled into unknown places, or "infer-

nos," and journeyed into their own consciences.

At the end, they both meet, and we realise the invisible connection between them. Although they are complete strangers, both maintain that they might have switched fates at some point in their lives; one has sacrificed 'too much, while the other gave nothing. At the conclusion, they switch fates again: Evanthia decides not to return to her husband, and Manos assumes his obligation in leading a sincere life.

From the beginning, we realise that the direct story outline is only a secondary issue. The process of finding Evanthia was extremely

simple, and in that sense Hades succeeded in allowing for more focus on the metaphysical aspect of the film, which unfolds in a gradual and intriguing manner.

One drawback was the use of some visual tricks which failed to serve the plot although they were creative. For example, we see characters present in two different settings at the same time, and while both the plot and the visual were abstract, one would fail to find the relevance between both. Still, Hades excels in combining the best of all elements — creative plot, intelligent realisation, excellent cinematography and dialogue.

Jordanian products exhibition opens in Baghdad on Dec. 17

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan will open an industrial fair in Baghdad on Dec. 17 to promote the sale of national products, a statement by the Jordan Export Development and Commercial Centres Corporation said Saturday.

The announcement said the fair, which will continue through Dec. 25, will sell products on display directly to the public. A total of 50 Jordanian companies and industrial establishments will display products at the fair.

The fair, the second of its kind to be held in

Baghdad, is designed to boost sales of Jordanian products in the Iraqi market, which is a major recipient of Jordan's exports, particularly commodities that can be sold to Iraq under the U.N.-Iraq oil-for-food agreement.

The Jordanian fair follows the Baghdad International Fair, in which JEDCO took part, displaying products from 84 Jordanian companies. Jordan's wing at the fair was the largest among those of the 30 participating Arab and foreign countries.

NATO chief pays tribute to Kingdom's regional role

(Continued from page 1)

"In Spain, we will have a second round to what was started in Rome last year, including a debate on how much further the Mediterranean countries want to go, and how we can translate these wishes and ideas into reality," Solana said.

The dialogue is based on bilateral relations between NATO and each partici-

pating country, and each is represented at NATO at the ambassadorial level. However, it also allows for multilateral meetings on a case-by-case basis.

Yet, the level of representation is considered by some members as a sign that NATO is not taking the Mediterranean countries seriously.

Countering that argument, Solana said: "The important thing is not the

level of the representation in the meetings, but the content of the meetings. Although I don't think that any changes will take place soon."

"All countries in NATO are interested in the Mediterranean dialogue. We know that as we globalise, the most interesting parts are those who are closer [in proximity], and there is no question that the countries that are rep-

resented in the dialogue are closer to Europe," said Solana. "Therefore, we'll have an interaction, and continue further with our cooperation."

Asked if NATO has any position regarding the Middle East peace process, Solana declined to elaborate on that issue, but said: "There is no question that we have an interest in what is going on in the Middle East, but

it is not for me to give an answer to the political solution and the security guarantees of the situation."

However, he said "although NATO members are interested in having dialogue with the Mediterranean countries, that does not mean that there is a consensus between them towards a particular crisis in particular country."

'Social security plan to cost JD698m over 10 years'

AMMAN (Petra) — The 10-year government-sponsored social security package plan will cost an estimated JD698 million, Ibrahim Badran, director of the Palestinian Affairs Department, said Saturday.

Projects to be implemented under this programme will focus on modernising the infrastructure in 14 less-developed regions and the country's 13 Palestinian refugee camps in a bid to deal with the problems of poverty and unemployment and improve the quality of life in these areas, Badran said.

The first phase of the plan, covering the period 1998-2001, will cost an

estimated JD178 million while the second is scheduled to be carried out between 2001 and 2008 at the cost of JD520 million, according to Badran.

Badran said financing for the plan, which also includes skills training to enable the unemployed find jobs, will be provided by organisations such as the World Bank, the German Development Bank, the Arab Fund for Social and Economic Development, the Islamic Bank and the Italian government in the form of soft and long-term loans.

Around JD44 million will be spent on refugee camps in the first phase of the development projects,

which entail modernising general conditions and infrastructure as well as building four wastewater treatment plants, Badran added.

The first phase will include the construction or modernisation of electrical, water, sewage and road networks in the camps, located in Amman and other parts of the country.

Most of the tenders for designs and feasibility studies for the projects have been referred through the Ministry of Planning in conjunction with the Housing Corporation to local firms, said Badran, who noted that work is scheduled to start next year.

Refinery company completes preparations for winter demand

AMMAN (Petra) — The Jordan Petroleum Refinery Company has completed preparations to meet the expected increase in demand for oil products during the winter, the company's director general, Abdul Wahab Zou'bi, said Saturday.

Zou'bi said the company's warehouses in the Um Al Hiran area near Amman as well as those in Zarqa and Aqaba have a fuel storage capacity sufficient to meet the country's needs for 60 days.

Arrangements have also

been made to boost the production capacity of the refinery, which now stands at 14,000 tonnes per day of oil products, including gasoline, diesel, kerosene and heavy fuel, according to Zou'bi.

The Zarqa-based company owns and operates 400 oil tanker trucks to carry oil products to petrol stations around the country.

In addition to the 480 tonnes of gas produced daily by the refinery, the company is planning to

import 40,000 tonnes of gas over the winter to meet the expected increase in domestic demand, said Zou'bi, pointing out that in winter, the daily demand for gas normally rises to 1,400 tonnes per day from 500 tonnes in summer.

Referring to gas cylinders, Zou'bi said some 2.5 million are being circulated, but in view of the increase in demand, the company manufactured 60,000 additional units this year and imported another 200,000.

'UNSCOM inspectors can enter Baath offices on condition'

(Continued from page 1)

The inspectors must certify that Iraq has dismantled its chemical, biological and nuclear programmes and long-range

missiles. Until then, the U.N. Security Council will not lift an oil embargo and other sanctions it imposed after Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990.

This week's searches,

which are expected to end Monday, have been the most intensive since Iraq allowed the inspectors to resume work last month.

Iraq began curbing the inspections in August and

blocked their activities completely in October. However on Nov. 14, as the United States and Britain began to prepare air strikes on Iraq, the Baghdad government

backed down and pledged full cooperation.

Chief inspector Butler is scheduled to file a report on Iraqi cooperation to the U.N. secretary-general early next week.

N. Ireland peace process hits new stumbling block

BELFAST (AFP) — Northern Ireland's peace process hit a new stumbling block Saturday when pro-British unionists threatened to back-track on hard-won agreements.

The Ulster Unionist Party was reacting to Friday's announcement by the outlawed Irish Republican Army (IRA) that it had ruled out handing over any of its weapons in the immediate future.

John Taylor, the UUP's deputy leader, called on the British government to halt all IRA prisoner releases, due as part of the Good Friday peace accord that aimed to end 30 years of sectarian bloodshed in the province.

"This is a very dangerous moment for the U.K. government and there should be a cessation in the continuing release of IRA prisoners," he said.

Taylor also warned that Sinn Fein, the IRA's political wing, would not be allowed to join Northern Ireland's semi-autonomous assembly until the IRA handed over some weapons. "This is a serious blow because everyone else is doing what is required of them," he said.

"There is no question of allowing Sinn Fein into the cabinet of Northern Ireland whilst they retain illegal armaments and Semtex," Taylor said.

"If Sinn Fein-IRA don't proceed with decommissioning, that means that we will be forced to renegotiate the agreement on the basis that an executive could be formed without Sinn Fein being involved."

The decision on decommissioning was taken at a high-level IRA meeting last weekend in the Republic of Ireland, a source told AFP.

The declaration, the third time this year the IRA has ruled out any weapons han-

dovers, means that pro-unit Ireland paramilitaries have not changed their position of not surrendering "a single bullet" of four years ago.

Since the peace agreement was signed eight months ago, more than 200 IRA prisoners have been freed.

The issue of paramilitary disarmament has proved to be the main sticking point preventing implementation of the historic April 10 peace deal, which also allows for the setting up of cross-border bodies to co-ordinate policy across the island on some issues — giving the Irish government a say in the north's affairs for the first time.

Unionists, who support British rule in Northern Ireland, argue that decommissioning of IRA arms, demanded within two years under the peace agreement, is essential before the province's new semi-autonomous government can be set up.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair, speaking in Vienna where he is attending a European Union summit, said Friday: "Most people in Northern Ireland just wish to see the agreement implemented."

"I don't pretend to know the inner workings of the IRA. It is up to them. What I know is that the agreement must be implemented."

Alex Atwood, member for West Belfast of the main nationalist party, the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), said: "They have changed their position on many occasions."

"For years they argued for Brits out and now they have accepted the will of the Irish people. Whatever the IRA says today they can be compelled by the Irish people to fulfil their obligations."



Shuttle Endeavour Commander Robert Cabana answers a reporter's question during an interview with the crew aboard the shuttle Dec. 11. With Cabana are front row (left-right) Nancy Currie and Jim Newman. Back row (left-right) Russian Sergei Krikalev, Jerry Ross and Rick Sturckow. Earlier in the day, the crew ended their final day of work aboard the International Space Station, closing its hatches until another assembly crew arrives in about six months (Reuters photo)

Space station locked up; astronauts prepare for final spacewalk

SPACE CENTRE, Houston

(AP) — With the doors to the international space station closed and locked, Endeavour's astronauts turned their attention back to the exterior of the outpost and prepared for a final spacewalk Saturday to install a tool bag and unjam a stuck antenna.

"There's no time to let up yet," shuttle commander Robert Cabana said. Astronauts Jerry Ross and James Newman were to head out on their third spacewalk of the mission to attach a sack of tools to the American-made Unity chamber for use on subsequent assembly flights.

They also planned to use a 3-metre pole to try to deploy another stuck antenna on the Russian Zarya control module. The first of two jammed antennas was unfurled during a space-

walk Wednesday.

Saturday's 6 1/2-hour outing was to conclude with a photo survey of the seven-story, 35-tonne space station.

In their earlier spacewalks, Ross and Newman connected electrical and data cables and attached antennas to the outside of Unity. The work went well, although two tools and a thermal cover got loose from Ross and floated away — rare mistakes for America's most experienced spacewalker.

Ross promised extra precaution would be taken Saturday to avoid another bungle. "We have been putting multiple tethers on most of the objects now just to make sure that one can't come inadvertently loose somehow," he said.

Friday, the astronauts completed about 27 hours of work inside the space station before turning out the lights and closing the hatches. The outpost will be released from the shuttle's cargo bay Sunday, two days before Endeavour returns to Earth.

While inside, the crew wired up a communications system, removed bolts that had been installed to reinforce the two modules for launch and cleared a blocked air duct in Zarya.

They also left behind a few items for the first permanent residents, due to arrive in little more than a year: wrenches, screwdrivers, drills, a spare computer and clothes — even a surprise or two, although the astronauts wouldn't say what.

"Something that lets them know that we were thinking of them," Cabana hinted.

The astronauts also spent more than an hour searching for a missing pivot pin for a rack inside Unity. The pin got away from them and floated off. After removing panels and peeking into corners, they gave up and moved on to other close-out chores.

When it finally was time to leave, the crew of five Americans and one Russian — the first inside the orbiting outpost — were sorry to go. They couldn't resist doing a few final flips and somersaults on their way out.

"We sure wish we had another day. It's a shame we've got to close up shop so soon," Cabana radioed down. Soon after, he notified Mission Control when the last light went out.

"Till the next time," Mission Control replied.

"We expect him back as soon as possible but he may have to stay in Moscow for a couple of hours. My sister-in-law will meet him there."

United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan had told Cochetel's relatives Tuesday that he would ask Primakov's help.

UNHCR chief Sadako Ogata said she was grateful to the Russian Federation and North Ossetian officials for their efforts to obtain his release.

"I hope Vincent's long nightmare will focus the world's attention on the enormous risks humanitarian workers face daily in their work around the globe," she said.

Cochetel's release came after three Britons and a

Frenchman Vincent

Cochetel, taken hostage in the Russian Caucasus 10 months ago, has been freed.

The Interfax news agency reported Saturday, quoting police and President Russian Aushev of the bordering Russian republic of Ingushetia.

Cochetel, 37, a humanitarian worker for the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), was seized on Jan. 29 at Vladikavkaz, capital of North Ossetia. He was thought to have been taken to the neighbouring breakaway republic of Chechnya.

Aides to French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, in Vienna for a European Union summit, said Cochetel had arrived in Moscow and was at the French embassy there, and that Jospin had spoken to him by telephone.

They said Cochetel would be returning to France shortly, adding that Jospin was

"delighted" with the outcome and had telephoned his Russian counterpart Yevgeny Primakov to pass on the thanks of the French government.

Neither Aushev nor the Russian interior ministry would give details about the rescue, Interfax said.

The freeing of Cochetel, who is from the central French city of Tours, came after French President Jacques Chirac called for his release in a telephone conversation Wednesday with his Russian counterpart Boris Yeltsin.

Elysee spokeswoman Catherine Colonna said Saturday Chirac was "very happy about Vincent Cochetel's release."

Paris was sending a plane to Moscow Saturday to bring Cochetel back to France, said Colonna, speaking in Vienna.

Florence Cochetel, the wife of the released UNHCR worker, has spoken to her husband, his brother Gregoire told AFP from

Tours.

"Vincent's release was confirmed by the Quai d'Orsay (the French foreign ministry)," he said. "We are very much relieved."

He said the ex-hostage "seems to be well but is apparently tired."

"We expect him back as soon as possible but he may have to stay in Moscow for a couple of hours. My sister-in-law will meet him there."

United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan had told Cochetel's relatives Tuesday that he would ask Primakov's help.

UNHCR chief Sadako Ogata said she was grateful to the Russian Federation and North Ossetian officials for their efforts to obtain his release.

"I hope Vincent's long nightmare will focus the world's attention on the enormous risks humanitarian workers face daily in their work around the globe," she said.

Cochetel's release came after three Britons and a

NEWS IN BRIEF

EU leaders deplore lack of commitment to Kosovo negotiations

VIENNA (AP) — Leaders of the 15 European Union nations Saturday deplored the lack of commitment to the negotiation process by both ethnic Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo. In the draft communiqué at their year-end summit, the EU leaders urged the Yugoslav government of President Slobodan Milosevic and the leadership of the ethnic Albanians to show flexibility and reaffirmed the Union's determination to support the political process. Hundreds of people died, mostly civilians, and hundreds of thousands were driven from their homes during seven months of fighting in Kosovo, a poor southern province of Serbia, the dominant republic in the Yugoslav Federation. American mediator Christopher Hill is trying to draft a political settlement that would give extended autonomy to the Albanians, who make up 90 per cent of Kosovo's 2 million inhabitants. Neither the Americans nor the Europeans support demands by the ethnic Albanians for independence because of fears that could only be achieved through prolonged conflict. The EU said as soon as a political agreement is reached it would assist in the reconstruction of Kosovo through a donors' conference. "Convinced that democracy in (Yugoslavia) is crucial for peace and stability in the Balkans, the European Council condemns the crackdown on independent media and reiterates the EU's insistence on democratic reform and free media," the statement added.

Cambodian refugees in Thailand celebrate surrender of K. Rouge

BANGKOK (AP) — About 15,000 Cambodian refugees held a celebration at their refugee camp in Thailand after learning of the surrender of the last Khmer Rouge fighting force. The Nation newspaper reported Saturday. The Maoist guerrillas decision to end their decades-long war against the government in Phnom Penh meant the refugees would probably be able to return home by January, the paper said. Most were forced into Thailand because of fighting between government troops and the guerrillas. The Khmer Rouge were responsible for the deaths of as many as 2 million Cambodians when they ruled the country from 1975-79. The jocular celebration included religious services conducted by 30 Buddhist monks, the paper said.

Russians offer to upgrade Indian military helicopters

BANGALORE, India (AFP) — India's largest aircraft manufacturer and Russia's top helicopter firm Kazan have begun negotiations to upgrade New Delhi's ageing military helicopters, Indian officials said Saturday. Kazan Helicopter Plant's sales manager Alexander Emelushin said his company and Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd. (HAL) will jointly upgrade more than 100 helicopters of the Indian air force belonging to the Mi category. "The negotiations are at an advanced stage," the official said. HAL officials said the proposed joint venture marked Kazan's return to India after it failed to secure a deal to sell a fleet of offshore helicopters in 1994. Kazan unveiled its multi-role Mi-17KFP helicopters, which can be used for offshore operations, at an international air show this week in this southern city. "The new helicopter can fly in all conditions," Emelushin said. British helicopter firm GKN-Westland, meanwhile, said it was negotiating with New Delhi to upgrade 10 to 25 Sea King navy helicopters. A company spokesman said the upgrading involved latest avionics for the first batch of the multi-role helicopters that were inducted into the navy 15 years ago. The spokesman said U.S. sanctions against India for its nuclear tests in May had hit Westland's plans to use American equipment for the helicopters. "But European suppliers can bridge the gap," he said.

20 jailed for life over Mafia crimes

ROME (AFP) — A Sicilian court has sentenced 20 people to life in prison and 22 others to a total of 244 years for 20 Mafia-style killings between 1983 and 1993, judicial sources said Saturday. Seven people were acquitted by the appeals court in Catania which handed down the verdicts late Friday. A total 49 suspected members of the Sicilian Cosa Nostra stood trial. Defendants included three physicians, two nurses and a former tax police, all members of a Mafia clan headed by Giuseppe Pulvirenti who cooperated with police. Pulvirenti had been charged with the murder of eight people and was jailed for 24 years and five months. His son Antonino and his son-in-law Piero Puglisi were jailed for life.

Lead singer of rock band Snot killed in highway accident

VENTURA, California (AP) — The lead singer of the punk rock group Snot was killed in a highway accident on a coastal freeway. Lynn Strait, 30, was driving from his home in Santa Barbara to Los Angeles Friday afternoon when the accident occurred, said Nic Adler, his manager. Strait's dog, Dobbs, was also killed. Details of the accident were not immediately known. Snot signed with Geffen Records in 1996 and released its debut album, "Get Some," last year. They were a featured act on this year's "Ozzfest '98" tour. Strait was arrested earlier this year and charged with indecent exposure and open and gross lewdness. Prosecutors said Strait walked naked onto a stage during a performance in Attleboro, Massachusetts, and performed a sex act with a female dancer. Strait denied that a sex act was committed, saying it was simulated. The group was to start recording its second album Wednesday, Adler said. "I really don't know where we're going at this point," he said.

Astronomers think there may be 'hidden planets' in the universe

MUNICH (DPA) — Astronomers believe there may be large, as yet undiscovered, planets around 25 to 30 billion kilometres out in the universe. They have been led to this conclusion, European Southern Observatory (ESO) astronomer Richard West explained, by the discovery of a series of small planets, observed with the aid of the new VLT telescope at the ESO base in Chile. Experts have known for the past six years of the existence of these minor bodies, measuring up to 100 kilometres in diameter. They are remnants of the birth of a planet, far enough away from the sun to have been preserved "as in a refrigerator," said West. The new, extremely powerful telescope will make it possible to explore the surface of these minor bodies. The focus of interest is whether, in addition to ice and dust, it will be possible to identify organic molecules there, something nobody has so far succeeded in doing. The scientists hope that the minor bodies will provide them with further clues as to how the solar system emerged. Observation is being concentrated on the Kuiper Belt, stretching across a distance of between five and 30 kilometres from Earth. So far, around 10,000 minor bodies have been catalogued in this region, 70 of them at its utmost extremity. However, experts suspect there may be more than 100,000 such planets, including "hidden objects" between 1,000 and 2,000 kilometres in diameter, said West. Earth is 12,800 kilometres in diameter.

At least 8 dead, 29 missing in Philippine typhoon

MANILA (AFP) — The toll from Typhoon Faith's swift but deadly rampage across the central Philippines rose to at least eight dead and 29 missing, disaster officials and reports said Saturday.

Coast Guard officials said 11 fishermen were reported missing and four were rescued after their boat, Myra-1, sank in heavy seas off Pila Island in the southern Philippines.

The incident raised the number of missing from typhoon Faith to at least 29 people. The remainder were on small fishing boats that capsized in seas off the central Philippines which was on the direct path of the storm.

The state-run Office of Civil Defence put the toll at eight dead and 12 missing. The fatalities in the provinces of Antique, Iloilo, Aklan and Albay include drowning victims and those pinned to death by falling trees.

Civil defence officials said 9,715 persons were affected, including more than 1,300 people who were evacuated.

Damage to agriculture and infrastructure totalled 15.8 million pesos (\$405,000), the civil defence office said.

The Manila weather bureau said the storm struck the central Visayan region, a string of islands in the country's central section,

before dawn Friday with winds gusting up to 150 kilometres an hour.

It churned westward, toppling electric posts, uprooting trees and bringing torrential rains.

Its fringe winds whipped southern portions of the country. The navy and a civilian ship rescued 89 passengers and 10 crew members off a disabled ferry bound for the Malaysian province of Sandakan between the Sulu and Tawi-Tawi island groups in the south.

The famished and bagged passengers of the 315-tonne Kawan Express arrived in the southern city of Zamboanga aboard another ferry after mid-day Saturday, recalling a gut-wrenching 36-hour ordeal in which their vessel rolled with big waves "like a toy ship."

Typhoon-induced rains flooded streets in Manila Friday, causing traffic snarls late into the night.

Faith weakened into a tropical storm late Friday but reintensified into a typhoon while over the South China Sea with sustained winds of 120 kph, the Manila weather bureau said Saturday.

It was moving west southwest at 24 kilometres per hour towards Vietnam, it said. Storm warnings across the Philippines have been lifted, the bureau said.

French hostage in Chechnya freed

MOSCOW (AFP) —

Frenchman Vincent Cochetel, taken hostage in the Russian Caucasus 10 months ago, has been freed.

The Interfax news agency reported Saturday, quoting police and President Russian Aushev of the bordering Russian republic of Ingushetia.

Cochetel, 37, a humanitarian worker for the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), was seized on Jan. 29 at Vladikavkaz, capital of North Ossetia. He was thought to have been taken to the neighbouring breakaway republic of Chechnya.

Aides to French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, in Vienna for a European Union summit, said Cochetel had arrived in Moscow and was at the French embassy there, and that Jospin had spoken to him by telephone.

They said Cochetel would be returning to France shortly, adding that Jospin was

"delighted" with the outcome and had telephoned his Russian counterpart Yevgeny Primakov to pass on the thanks of the French government.

Neither Aushev nor the Russian interior ministry would give details about the rescue, Interfax said.

The freeing of Cochetel, who is from the central French city of Tours, came after French President Jacques Chirac called for his release in a telephone conversation Wednesday with his Russian counterpart Boris Yeltsin.

Elysee spokeswoman Catherine Colonna said Saturday Chirac was "very happy about Vincent Cochetel's release."

Paris was sending a plane to Moscow Saturday to bring Cochetel back to France, said Colonna, speaking in Vienna.

Florence Cochetel, the wife of the released UNHCR worker, has spoken to her husband, his brother Gregoire told AFP from

Tours.

"Vincent's release was confirmed by the Quai d'Orsay (the French foreign ministry)," he said. "We are very much relieved."

He said the ex-hostage "seems to be well but is apparently tired."

"We expect him back as soon as possible but he may have to stay in Moscow for a couple of hours. My sister-in-law will meet him there."

United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan had told Cochetel's relatives Tuesday that he would ask Primakov's help.

UNHCR chief Sadako Ogata said she was grateful to the Russian Federation and North Ossetian officials for their efforts to obtain his release.

"I hope Vincent's long nightmare will focus the world's attention on the enormous risks humanitarian workers face daily in their work around the globe," she said.

Cochetel's release came after three Britons and a

Frenchman Vincent

Cochetel, taken hostage in the Russian Caucasus 10 months ago, has been freed.

The Interfax news agency reported Saturday, quoting police and President Russian Aushev of the bordering Russian republic of Ingushetia.

Cochetel, 37, a humanitarian worker for the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), was seized on Jan. 29 at Vladikavkaz, capital of North Ossetia. He was thought to have been taken to the neighbouring breakaway republic of Chechnya.

Aides to French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, in Vienna for a European Union summit, said Cochetel had arrived in Moscow and was at the French embassy there, and that Jospin had spoken to him by telephone.

They said Cochetel would be returning to France shortly, adding that Jospin was

"delighted" with the outcome and had telephoned his Russian counterpart Yevgeny Primakov to pass on the thanks of the French government.

Neither Aushev nor the Russian interior ministry would give details about the rescue, Interfax said.

The freeing of Cochetel, who is from the central French city of Tours, came after French President Jacques Chirac called for his release in a telephone conversation Wednesday with his Russian counterpart Boris Yeltsin.

Elysee spokeswoman Catherine Colonna said Saturday Chirac was "very happy about Vincent Cochetel's release."

Paris was sending a plane to Moscow Saturday to bring Cochetel back to France, said Colonna, speaking in Vienna.

Florence Cochetel, the wife of the released UNHCR worker, has spoken to her husband, his brother Gregoire told AFP from

Tours.

"Vincent's release was confirmed by the Quai d'Orsay (the French foreign ministry)," he said. "We are very much relieved."

He said the ex-hostage "seems to be well but is apparently tired."

"We expect him back as soon as possible but he may have to stay in Moscow for a couple of hours. My sister-in-law will meet him there."

United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan had told Cochetel's relatives Tuesday that he would ask Primakov's help.

UNHCR chief Sadako Ogata said she was grateful to the Russian Federation and North Ossetian officials for their efforts to obtain his release.

"I hope Vincent's long nightmare will focus the world's attention on the enormous risks humanitarian workers face daily in their work around the globe," she said.

Cochetel's release came after three Britons and a

Frenchman Vincent

Cochetel, taken hostage in the Russian Caucasus 10 months ago, has been freed.

The Interfax news agency reported Saturday, quoting police and President Russian Aushev of the bordering Russian republic of Ingushetia.

Cochetel, 37, a humanitarian worker for the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), was seized on Jan. 29 at Vladikavkaz, capital of North Ossetia. He was thought to have been taken to the neighbouring breakaway republic of Chechnya.

Aides to French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, in Vienna for a European Union summit, said Cochetel had arrived in Moscow and was at the French embassy there, and that Jospin had spoken to him by telephone.

They said Cochetel would be returning to France shortly, adding that Jospin was

"delighted" with the outcome and had telephoned his Russian counterpart Yevgeny Primakov to pass on the thanks of the French government.

Neither Aushev nor the Russian interior ministry would give details about the rescue, Interfax said.

The freeing of Cochetel, who is from the central French city of Tours, came after French President Jacques Chirac called for his release in a telephone conversation Wednesday with his Russian counterpart Boris Yeltsin.

Elysee spokeswoman Catherine Colonna said Saturday Chirac was "very happy about Vincent Cochetel's release."

Paris was sending a plane to Moscow Saturday to bring Cochetel back to France, said Colonna, speaking in Vienna.

Florence Cochetel, the wife of the released UNHCR worker, has spoken to her husband, his brother Gregoire told AFP from

Tours.

"Vincent's release was confirmed by the Quai d'Orsay (the French foreign ministry)," he said. "We are very much relieved."

He said the ex-hostage "seems to be well but is apparently tired."

"We expect him back as soon as possible but he may have to stay in Moscow for a couple of hours. My sister-in-law will meet him there."

United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan had told Cochetel's relatives Tuesday that he would ask Primakov's help.

UNHCR chief Sadako Ogata said she was grateful to the Russian Federation and North Ossetian officials for their efforts to obtain his release.

"I hope Vincent's long nightmare will focus the world's attention on the enormous risks humanitarian workers face daily in their work around the globe," she said.

Cochetel's release came after three Britons and a

Frenchman Vincent

Cochetel, taken hostage in the Russian Caucasus 10 months ago, has been freed.

The Interfax news agency reported Saturday, quoting police and President Russian Aushev of the bordering Russian republic of Ingushetia.

Cochetel, 37, a humanitarian worker for the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), was seized on Jan. 29 at Vladikavkaz, capital of North Ossetia. He was thought to have been taken to the neighbouring breakaway republic of Chechnya.

Aides to French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, in Vienna for a European Union summit, said Cochetel had arrived in Moscow and was at the French embassy there, and that Jospin had spoken to him by telephone.

They said Cochetel would be returning to France shortly, adding that Jospin was

"delighted" with the outcome and had telephoned his Russian counterpart Yevgeny Primakov to pass on the thanks of the French government.

Neither Aushev nor the Russian interior ministry would give details about the rescue, Interfax said.

The freeing of Cochetel, who is from the central French city of Tours, came after French President Jacques Chirac called for his release in a telephone conversation Wednesday with his Russian counterpart Boris Yeltsin.

Elysee spokeswoman Catherine Colonna said Saturday Chirac was "very happy about Vincent Cochetel's release."

Paris was sending a plane to Moscow Saturday to bring Cochetel back to France, said Colonna, speaking in Vienna.

Florence Cochetel, the wife of the released UNHCR worker, has spoken to her husband, his brother Gregoire told AFP from

Tours.

"Vincent's release was confirmed by the Quai d'Orsay (the French foreign ministry)," he said. "We are very much relieved."

He said the ex-hostage "seems to be well but is apparently tired."

"We expect him back as soon as possible but he may have to stay in Moscow for a couple of hours. My sister-in-law will meet him there."

United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan had told Cochetel's relatives Tuesday that he would ask Primakov's help.

UNHCR chief Sadako Ogata said she was grateful to the Russian Federation and North Ossetian officials for their efforts to obtain his release.



Thai soldiers and rescuers search for victims killed in a plane crash outside Surat Thani airport in Thailand. At least 97 people died when a Thai Airways Airbus crashed while trying to land in a rainstorm. Forty-six people survived the accident (Reuters photo)

'Thai air crash probably due to weather'

SURAT THANI, Thailand (R) — Bad weather appears a likely cause of the crash of a Thai Airways Airbus in which almost 100 people died, a senior international air crash investigator said on Saturday.

But the investigator, who declined to be identified, said pilot error could not be ruled out.

As aviation officials began looking into the cause of Friday night's crash of flight TG 261 from Bangkok to the southern city of Surat Thani, officials of Thai International Airways said it was too early to speculate as to the cause of the disaster.

Survivors of the crash said the pilot had told passengers that visibility was low and the plane had made three unsuccessful attempts to land before it made its fatal plunge in a rain storm into a waterlogged swamp.

The aircraft, carrying 132 passengers and 14 crew,

came down about three km from Surat Thani Airport, which serves the popular Thai island resort of Koh Samui.

"It doesn't look like you have to look far to investigate this one," the Singapore-based investigator said.

Asked if weather was the likely cause, the investigator replied: "It looks like that's it."

However, confirmation of this would have to wait for studies of the flight data recorder, the cockpit voice recorder and the scattering of the wreckage, the investigator said.

A Bangkok-based employee of the European consortium Airbus Industrie, who flew over the crash site in a helicopter, said the wreckage was strewn over an area of at least half a kilometre.

Seven investigators from Airbus headquarters in

Toulouse in southwestern France, were due to arrive in Thailand to investigate the crash, he said.

The air crash investigator said experts should be able to determine the aircraft's direction and "attitude" — whether it was straight and level or pointing towards the ground at the time of impact — from the scattering of the wreckage.

"It may well be it was the weather, but maybe the pilot stalled," he said.

"You would be able to tell that by the scatter pattern — the bit that hit first would be left further back," he said.

He said the time taken to analyse flight data and cockpit recorders varied from a matter of days to months, depending on the complexity of the case.

One key would be the status of the landing aids at Surat Thani, he said.

"You want to know what type they have and whether

they were switched on and functioning properly," he said.

"Even if the weather was bad, the pilot should have been able to follow the landing aids to locate the airfield. It's a bit of a mystery why he was unable to do so," he said.

Senior officials of Thai Airways, including company president Tammooon Wanglee, told Reuters they did not know the details of the navigation system at Surat Thani.

They referred inquiries to a senior officer in charge of operations who declined to give his name.

The officer said the airport used a type of landing aid known as the "VOR" system.

"This equipment was operating perfectly yesterday," he said.

He declined to give further details of the landing aid system.

U.S. press scolds Clinton morning after impeachment charges approved

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Leading U.S. newspapers scolded President Bill Clinton Saturday for failing to confess explicitly to lying, after a congressional committee voted to send impeachment charges on to the full U.S. House of Representatives.

Friday, a last-ditch expression of "profound remorse" from Clinton had failed to stop the House Judiciary Committee from voting to send formal articles of impeachment on to the full House.

In a brief and dramatic televised address from the White House Rose Garden, Clinton had said his fate rested with the people and Congress and declared himself "ready to accept" a formal congressional rebuke.

"I would give anything to go back and undo what I did," he said.

But pundits immediately noted that Clinton's latest show of contrition over his 18-month affair with a White House intern stopped short of any explicit admission to having lied under oath.

And the editorial pages of major U.S. newspapers Saturday scolded Clinton for missing the opportunity to confess clearly and directly to lying.

"It is hard to fathom what gain Bill Clinton thought he could achieve Friday in restating his remorse ... while still dodging the core issue of his

deceitful testimony under oath," said the New York Times Saturday, in an editorial titled "Contrition Without Confession."

According to the Washington Post, in an editorial titled "Another Apology": "President Clinton emerged from the White House to deliver himself of one more act of contrition ... (but) if substance was his goal, it was another opportunity missed."

With Friday's votes along party lines by the House Judiciary Committee to approve three articles of impeachment against Clinton, the third presidential impeachment process in U.S. history was launched.

A fourth article was to be considered early Saturday.

All 21 Republicans on the committee voted in favour of the first impeachment article Friday, charging Clinton lied to a federal grand jury about his affair with Monica Lewinsky. All 16 committee Democrats voted against it.

One Republican later broke party ranks to oppose a second article of impeachment, which passed by a 20-17 vote.

The Republican to break party ranks was South Carolina representative Lindsey Graham, who voted against accusing Clinton of lying under oath, by denying an affair with the ex-White House intern, in a January deposition associated with Paula Jones' sexual

harassment lawsuit against him. It was the first ballot not strictly along party lines in the committee proceedings.

Finally, in the last vote of the gruelling 12-hour day of televised hearings Friday, the committee voted — this time again along strict party lines — to adopt a third article alleging obstruction of justice.

After that vote the committee immediately adjourned until early Saturday, when it was to consider both a fourth article of impeachment focusing on alleged abuse of presidential power and, separately, an alternative proposal from Democrats that would formally rebuke Clinton.

Democrats have introduced the measure in a bid to siphon support from impeachment.

If the full House — which outgoing House Speaker Newt Gingrich said would vote Dec. 17 — approves any formal charges against Clinton, he would be the second U.S. president to be impeached.

The process would then move on to the U.S. Senate, where sixty-seven senators would need to vote to convict Clinton to make him the first U.S. president ever thus ousted.

But the Republicans' 228-206 majority in the House could be vulnerable to defections that would defeat an impeachment resolution. In an effort to avoid the entire scenario, committee Democrats — who say Clinton did wrong

but should not be impeached — have crafted precisely the sort of censure to which he submitted in his public statement Friday.

The sternly-worded rebuke, which Clinton would be required to sign, would leave him exposed to prosecution for his actions after he left office, according to its author, Democrat William Delahunt.

The Massachusetts lawmaker Friday stressed that "this is a capital case. This case involves the death penalty ... politically speaking."

That comment came as fiery partisan rhetoric engulfed the panel's debate on the first article in the same room where, a quarter-century ago, similar proceedings took place against then-President Richard Nixon.

Democrats sought to force Republicans to detail exactly which Clinton testimony was perjurious rather than generally allege that Clinton lied under oath.

Republican James Sensenbrenner denounced that effort as "a very clever ruse ... to attempt to limit evidence" that could be used against Clinton.

Democrat Barney Frank wryly called the Republicans' resistance "an understandable reluctance to say we want him (Clinton) thrown out of office because ... he didn't tell us what he touched."

Yeltsin cautions against constitutional changes

MOSCOW (AP) — President Boris Yeltsin Saturday said the five-year-old constitution has provided stability for Russia and he warned against making any changes that would return the country to its Communist past.

In a radio speech marking Constitution Day, Yeltsin said any changes to the constitution should be introduced with great care.

"Those feeling nostalgia for the old order have launched a

discussion in favour of replacing the present constitution," Yeltsin said. "They are calling for vesting parliament with all possible powers. They are effectively proposing that the country revert to being a republic of Soviets."

Yeltsin said he was absolutely opposed to replacing the constitution. "I think this would be deadly for the country," he said.

"Russia, an immense country, must have powerful supreme authorities," Yeltsin said in the

pre-recorded address.

"Without such authorities we will not be able to deal with the acute problems Russia is facing."

In the five years since the document was approved, "the constitution has more than once helped the country to remain stable," Yeltsin said.

"We have overcome this year's difficult political crises only because we have adhered to our fundamental law clearly and consistently." After the

speech was aired, Yeltsin hosted a Kremlin reception marking Constitution Day in his third public appearance since Monday.

The president was scheduled to return later to his Russian residence, 100 kilometres north of Moscow, where he has been recuperating after his release Wednesday from the hospital where he spent two weeks being treated for pneumonia, the Kremlin press service said.

Malaysia's governing party meets amid political storm

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — For the first time since Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad set off a political storm by sacking his deputy, the governing party is meeting to attend to serious house-keeping problems and a sagging image.

Sunday's meeting of national delegates of the United Malays National Organisation has a formal agenda of amending rules for its internal elections, but the gathering is likely to be dominated by issues of succession and the party's eroding popularity.

"Much gossiping in the corridors may well centre on the developments concerning the vacant deputy president's post," said an editorial in Saturday's edition of the government-backed New Straits Times.

Ahead of the meeting, party leaders called on younger cadres to demonstrate support for the man who is facing his first serious challenge in an unbroken 17-year-rule.

"UMNO youth should never ever go against the party leadership," party vice president Najib Tun Razak said in a speech Saturday.

The party has not had a deputy leader since Mahathir threw Anwar Ibrahim out of the deputy prime minister's office on Sept. 2 and ordered the party to expel him the next day.

The absence of a successor to the 72-year-old leader, who has been in poor health in recent weeks, has added to the uncertainty caused by Malaysia's economic problems.

Anwar's arrest on Sept. 20 angered many Malaysians, who were further outraged when the former protégé of Mahathir showed up in court for his arraignment with bruises and a black eye from a police beating.

Tens of thousands have demonstrated in the normally-placid South East Asian nation's capital to demand Anwar's release.

The Anwar episode contin-

ues to haunt the party at a time when Mahathir has been trying to focus the government's energy on combating Malaysia's worst recession in a decade.

While many influential party leaders were jailed for varying periods for openly

supporting Anwar's call for more liberal politics, hundreds from among the rank and file have reportedly deserted the party and shifted to an opposition Islamic fundamentalist group.

The UMNO meeting comes three days after Anwar's sup-

porters formally launched a group to campaign for political reform and social justice. Azizah Ismail, the jailed politician's wife, who set herself up as its leader, said her first task would be to end what she called Mahathir's one-man rule.

Your New Online
Interactive Service **connect now**
www.baladna.com.jo



More Entertaining Than Television,
More Informative Than A Newspaper

- Community Service
- Electronic Shopping
- News & Media
- Hajjaj On-Line
- The Essential Jordan Directory!
- What's On in Amman?
- Theater & Movie Guide
- Weather Forecast



For Advertising on BALADNA, please contact ZOOM MEDIA at Tel: 551-1018 / 551-3371, Fax: 551-0907
Global One Sales Office Tel: 569-7777 - Fax: 568-5106 - E-mail: info@go.com.jo - http://www.go.com.jo

200 MINUTES FREE!!



A Gift Worth JD 37 for You or a Friend

Ramadan and Christmas are a time for celebration and giving.

So when you subscribe to Fastlink during the month of December, you will get 200 free minutes*... that's JD 37 credited to your account! You can keep the 200 minutes for yourself; or, if you are in a giving mood this holiday, you can give 100 minutes to a friend or charity that already has a Fastlink connection... and keep 100 minutes for yourself! And, in the spirit of giving, Fastlink will connect you absolutely free of charge so you can spend your free minutes talking on your new Motorola d520, available for only JD 70!

For more information call us at: Amman: 551 2010, Wihdat (Tayebat Village): 477 0770, Aqaba: 03 202 2557, Irbid (Housing Bank Complex): 02 251 691, dial 111 on your mobile, or contact one of our direct sales representatives.

Authorized Dealers: Mabco: 484 7666, Al Raed Al Ordany: 560 2924, Sawalha: 551 8897, Al Aryan: 551 9553, Mobile World: 552 1411, TeleLink 586 1065, Telecom: 566 9996, Samsung (GSM): 462 1599, MEXCOM: 4657303, Globat: 551 8778, Nextech: 567 7729, Connect (Irbid): 02 270061, Al-Habeeb (Tafila): 03 343710.

Please Note: * A JD 100 deposit may apply. Prices subject to 10% government sales tax. Offer not applicable to Sadaq and Corporate subscriptions. Jordanian nationals must present proof of their national identity number. Non-residents must present proof of their residency. Credit for free minutes (JD 18,500 per 100 minutes) will be applied in January 1999. Gift recipients must be Fastlink subscribers prior to October 1, 1998. Recipients of free minutes are limited to a maximum of 500 minutes. Motorola d520 subject to availability. Motorola d520 available separately at JD 273. Regular rates will be applied if subscription is terminated within 90 days. Offer ends Dec. 31, 1998.

GSN

Fastlink
Keep Close

...Arab American literature...
...emphasized in the...
...while States which is very...
...and more because the...
...Arab have a very rich heri...
...to literature," Dallas...
...fact, they are progre...

In this century, we fought each other for oil. In the next, we will fight over water

With the world's population rising by an India every 10 years, many people will soon be dying for a drink

By Robin McKie

IN INDIA, lakes are poisoned by sewage; in Africa, rivers turn into filthy trickles; around Asia's Aral Sea, millions of people have been stranded as the waters shrink and dry up.

Everyday, more and more people suffer the same crisis: not enough water. Scientists calculate that seven per cent of the human race do not have enough to survive.

But much worse lies in store. Their figures show that this will rise to a staggering 70 per cent by 2050. Most of humanity faces a future without the most basic of resources.

As a result, scientists have decided to dedicate the next decade to campaigns to counter the world's growing water crisis. United Nations hydrologists and meteorologists — meeting at the U.K. Institute of Hydrology last week — agreed that urgent action is needed to prevent much of the planet from dying of thirst and, in its wake, of starvation.

The meeting, convened by UNESCO, agreed to set up a World Hydrology Initiative to develop ways to make use of every dribble and drip of water for irrigation and agriculture and to curb water wars.

Battles over water are already spreading across Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia. Egypt has threatened to attack Ethiopia because it says it is taking too much from the Nile, while Syria says Turkey is stealing water from the Euphrates.

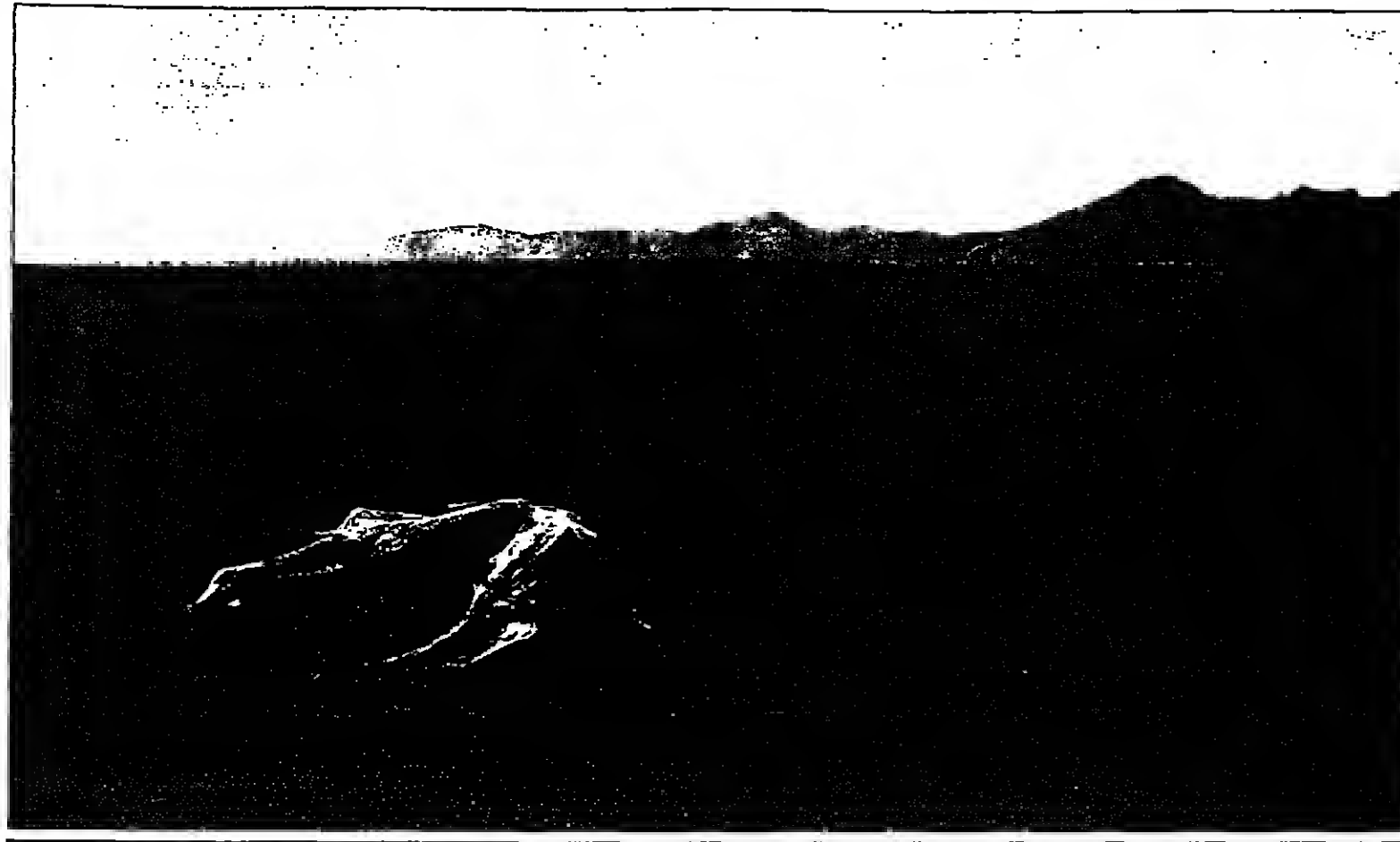
"Many of the wars of this century were about oil, but the wars of the next century will be about water," says Ismail Seageldin, vice-president of the World Bank.

The prospect of mankind hantling over access to shrivelling rivers and lakes sounds like science fiction. But the arithmetic of conflict looks inescapable.

Every decade, the world's population is set to rise by around a billion — until 2050, when the rise is expected to slow down. By then the Earth will have more than 10 billion people.

"That rise is the equivalent of a new India being added to the world's population every 10 years," said Professor Jim Wallace of the Institute of Hydrology in Oxfordshire. "Finding water for them is going to be very tricky."

The irony is that our planet is awash with water. In total, there is about 1,400 million million litres; about 100 billion litres per person. Unfortunately, 97 per cent is sea



The poorest areas are the driest, and will also see the highest rise in their populations (file photo)

water. The rest is fresh, but most of it is trapped underground or stored at the poles as snow and ice.

In fact, only 0.8 per cent of Earth's water is accessible and drinkable — about a billion billion litres. Given that a person's minimum annual requirement is a million litres, there is still enough — on average. But water is unevenly distributed. Some countries — such as Canada, Scotland or Norway — have more than they want, but other regions — Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia — are desperately short.

Ironically, these latter regions will be responsible for most of the world population's growth in the next 50 years. Their children

will be the thirsty ones — or, more probably, the hungry ones.

"We need water for drinking, keeping clean, and making things — but, most importantly, we need it for farming," said Wallace. "About three-quarters of the water we use goes on growing food."

Making better use of irrigation water is central to the crisis the world faces, he added. "We might be able to increase the world's arable land by about 10 per cent — at the very most. But at the same time, the population will go up by 65 per cent. We therefore have to increase crop yields dramatically, and we can only do that if we make much better use of the water we use for irrigation."

Scientists at last week's hydrology conference revealed that only 15 per cent of water that falls as rain or arrives through irrigation channels gets taken up by crops. The rest is lost through poor drainage, badly constructed channels, evaporation or poor storage. Finding ways to halt this water loss is critical to alleviating global suffering.

Measures outlined at the conference included the planting of careful mixes of crops and bushes, for example. The latter would provide shade for the former and so halt evaporation from the soil. Similarly, leaving the ground covered with leaves and mulches would cut water loss, while shrubs whose roots bind the soil could reduce drainage.

Improving water storage, building terraces and planting hedgerows would also be key low-tech solutions.

In addition, delegates discussed ways to prevent water wars — though this promises to be a complex, tricky business. Last year the U.N. — after struggling with the issue for 30 years — adopted a convention on international waters. This sets a framework for sharing rivers and lakes, but needs 35 signatories before it can be ratified in May.

Only 11 nations have so far signed the convention. Unless another 24 are found in the next few months, it will be lost. Few experts are optimistic.

The problem is a legal minefield. Consider the Aral Sea. It is drying up because of irrigation and hydro-electric schemes, leaving the inhabitants of five countries — Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan — without water. The problem is unresolved.

"Water is a very political issue, and central to any attempt to end poverty in the world," said water law expert Dr. Patricia Wouters of Dundee University.

However, the very countries that need water most are the ones who are threatened with having their supplies capped. "Usually downstream nations are the ones that first develop and become dependent on water."

A good example is Egypt. The Nile cannot supply it with all the water it now needs, so Egypt imports millions of tonnes of grain. But now, upstream, Ethiopia is starting to build small dams for electrical power and irrigation, while another eight countries, including Sudan, say they also want more water from the Nile. Egypt — whose population will double in 35 years — has said the taking of more Nile water by any country would be an act of war.

The crisis sounds intractable. Nevertheless, there are signs of hope. Nepal, India and Bangladesh recently signed an agreement over sharing the waters of the Ganges.

"They reached a perfectly amicable deal, yet it was signed in the midst of high tension during the Kashmir crisis," said Wouters. "They understand the need for cooperation when it comes to water. It is very encouraging."

— The Observer



Culture The novel as a vehicle for telling the Palestinian story

By Ray Hanania

ARAB AMERICAN literature usually comes in one packaged form: dry, statistically correct, dissertations on politics that any career academic would love to read.

But, most Americans steer clear of these heavy doses of political argumentation and debates.

The typical American doesn't get the opportunity to read the non-political story of the Palestinians and the Arab World, because it is rare and difficult to find.

But I recently discovered through acquaintances, a talented Palestinian man, Shaw Dallal, who has written a novel that offers in a marvellously fresh way the tragedy of the Palestinian people. It's achievement is that it presents, maybe for the first time, the story of the Palestinians in a human way.

Using the novel as his vehicle, founded on historical facts, Dallal tells the story of a Palestinian in a way that Americans would be interested to read. Dallal points out that the Arab World has made a major contribution over the generations to World Literature and that true literature exists and is only now making its way into the United States.

"Arab American literature is little emphasised in the United States which is very unfortunate because the Arabs have a very rich heritage in literature," Dallal notes.

"In fact, they are probably the fathers of the novel as

we know it today. The Arabian Nights is a contribution they made to world literature from which even Shakespeare has borrowed heavily." It is still new, Dallal points out.

"Arab American literature is really in its infancy in the United States," he explains, noting that most Arab American writing has been in the form of political discussions and academically focused.

"For the most part, Arab Americans have concentrated on political writings. Very few Arab Americans have indulged themselves

in producing Arab literature," he observes.

"Scattered like seeds could be a pioneering experiment, because it literally tells the story from a literary perspective of the agony of an Arab American who has one foot in the United States and another in his native lands and culture. Writing this from a literary point of view could be a very revealing experiment."

Telling a story from this literary point of view presents a more human story and it therefore can evoke a greater response from American readers who are turned off by politics.

One observer wrote of Dallal's book, "Scattered Like Seeds puts a human face on the tragedy which has befallen the Palestinian people in our time. This intimate and touching story brings to the American reader a side of the Middle East conflict which Americans long overlooked." Dallal agrees that when talking to Americans, it is

more potent to talk to them in human terms rather than in political terms.

"That is exactly what I have tried to do with this novel," he says.

"There is enough politics in the discussions that have existed about our people in the past, but not enough discussions about the

human side of the Palestinians and the Arab people." But with any new or emerging change, there is always concern about its acceptance.

"I was concerned to present this publicly, at first, because the approach is so new to our community. I was unsure of the reaction

of our community, so I presented it to two Palestinians I know who read it and said that they were moved by the story in a way that had not occurred before," he recalls.

"We have to change how we write about ourselves if we expect Americans to change how they view us,"

he agrees.

Dallal adds, "Scattered Like Seeds addresses the American reader because, as you say, the American reader does not see the face of the Palestinian tragedy and has only been presented the politics." This is Dallal's first book, and probably not his last. But he was

inspired to write it by his Anglo-Saxon father-in-law who was writing a genealogy of his own family's experiences, tracing their ties to the Mayflower and original American Pilgrims. "My kids asked me about my background and they wanted to hear it, so I sat down and wrote a short

story about how I came here and my children loved it," Dallal remembers.

"They asked me to write more. I did write more and ended up writing 900 or so pages. I submitted it to the publisher and he asked me to cut it down and I did." And the rest, you might say, is history.

Now with Our New Internet Upgrade The Gap Widens



No one comes close to the improvements that we at Global One have made over the past year.

Who can provide a service and speed of 2 mbps and over 400 telephone lines? It's easy to see why our subscribers get maximum benefit out of what the Internet has to offer. When you subscribe to Global One, not only do you get the fastest browsing and download speeds in Jordan, you can also enjoy value added services and features no other Internet Service Provider in Jordan can match.

Regular upgrades... yet another reason why Global One is Jordan's leading Internet Service Provider

Global One

Telecom Sprint

Sales office Tel: 569-7777 - Fax: 568-5106 - E-mail: info@go.com.jo - http://www.go.com.jo

EU leaders stuck on finance reform but say enlargement not in jeopardy

By Robert Wieland
Associated Press Writer

VIENNA (AP) — European Union leaders remained deadlocked Saturday over the EU's future financing but told counterparts from 11 other nations that the money fight won't slow their entry into the club.

The 15 EU leaders ended a two-day summit declaring "the overall enlargement process ... well underway." In a statement, they promised to resolve the money dispute by March.

After the summit, the Western Europeans met with leaders from Cyprus and 10 Eastern European countries with which membership talks began this fall.

They assured them that their ambitious expansion plan remains on track but set no entry dates. These

depend on how well the candidates get themselves in shape for membership.

The first newcomers will probably not join until at least 2004.

The summit did not end a dispute over how to finance expansion. Germany, France, the Netherlands, Austria, Sweden and Denmark seek a spending freeze, keeping outlays at \$5 billion European currency units (about \$100 billion) in the 2000-2006 period.

But Spain and other southerners fear losing aid money to poorer newcomers and want outlays at least to rise in line with economic growth, adding some \$24 billion to the EU budget by 2006.

The leaders pledged to craft "an appropriate financial framework" combining solidarity with austerity.

On another contentious issue, they agreed to take another look at an impending tax-free shopping ban, but stopped short of granting a reprieve for the perk that lets millions of travelers snap up liquor, tobacco and other bargains.

Tax-free shopping for travel within the EU is due to end within six months or so but France, Germany and Britain and others would like it to continue to save jobs. Critics say there is no need for duty-free shops in an EU without borders.

The leaders also committed themselves to fight joblessness through "quantified targets and deadlines," expanding an employment strategy launched last year.

The leaders pledged to pursue a credible European defence to ease their

reliance on the United States. The impetus to that was a declaration this month by France and Britain — Western Europe's only nuclear powers — that the EU must be able to act on its own with a "credible military force" within the NATO framework.

Complicating the money dispute is that Germany and other northerners complain that they already pay too much. German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, whose country still pays for absorbing East Germany, made it clear that Europe's enlargement problems are not going to be solved with a German chequebook.

In a related issue, British Prime Minister Tony Blair said he will not give up an annual rebate that Britain has been getting since 1984 for its net payments.

Britain's net payment to

the EU is some \$8 billion, half of which is refunded.

Still, Blair sided with Schröder, telling reporters: "It is obvious ... that enlargement will mean additional expenditure. We entirely understand the problems Germany has."

Eighty per cent of the EU's budget goes to farm subsidies and aid for poor regions. Taking on half a dozen poor Eastern European countries and millions of uneconomical farmers would break the budget unless serious reforms are undertaken.

"All around the table realised the historic need to come to a deal," said Dutch Prime Minister Wim Kok on the expansion issue. "If this bogs down you'll see a serious crisis situation, and that you cannot do to people whose expectations of Europe we have raised."

Lebanon seeks World Bank help to trim 'yawning' deficit

BEIRUT (AP) — The new Lebanese government sought World Bank help Friday to conduct a vast survey to find ways to reduce the country's budget deficit, Finance Minister Georges Corm said.

"We have discussed means to carry out this comprehensive survey and ways to draft the 1999 state budget," Corm told reporters after meeting with visiting World Bank Director for the Middle East and North Africa Inder Sud.

"The government intends to conduct this comprehensive survey as soon as possible so that we can have scientific and

objective knowledge, with the participation of the World Bank, of the financial situation in Lebanon," said Corm.

He said Lebanon will "ask the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to help the Lebanese government in its efforts to progressively cut the budget deficit which is now among the greatest problems in Lebanon."

"We already have very large programmes in Lebanon, but the level of more support to Lebanon depends on the capacity to absorb funds in an efficient manner," Sud said.

He also held talks Friday

with Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry Nasser Saidi and Minister of Information and Emigrants Affairs Anwar Al-Khalil on ways to support Lebanon's economic revival, government officials said.

The greatest challenges facing the new government are the yawning deficit, equal to 22 per cent of gross national product, and a public debt of \$16.6 billion piled up since the launch of the \$18-billion process of rebuilding from the 1975-1990 civil war.

The World Bank has earmarked \$600 million since

1992 to help finance infrastructure reconstruction, according to a recent report from the state Development and Reconstruction Council.

But banking sources said the three successive governments of former prime minister Rafik Hariri used only \$150 million from the long-term, low-interest loans which generally came with grace periods.

"Instead, Hariri turned to international financial markets with issues of high yield Eurobonds for three, five and seven years. New Prime Minister Salim Hoss said after his appointment last Friday that he

would adopt an "extremely austere policy" to cope with the nation's budgetary disarray and that bond issues were not a long-term solution.

Corm, who has a solid reputation as an economist, has already announced that he was considering tax hikes and privatisation to boost government income, reduce the budget deficit and redress the economy.

Hariri advocated privatising public services during the six years he was in power but each time, he ran into strong opposition from parliament and public opinion.

ASEAN eyes bold measures to ease economic crisis

HANOI (AP) — Southeast Asian economic ministers were thrashing out a package of bold measures Saturday to accelerate investment and trade flows into the region to kick-start a recovery from recession, delegates said.

The steps will be put to a leaders' summit meeting here Tuesday and Wednesday of the nine-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), five of whose economies are now mired in recession after a decade of robust growth.

A delegate who spoke on condition of anonymity said the ministers were considering opening a "two-year window" to foreign investors from outside the region as part of the economic recovery

measures.

He said investors would be offered special incentives to invest in ASEAN countries from 1999 to 2000, starting with the manufacturing sector, he said, adding there was "general agreement" on such a step.

The incentives are reported to include tax credits and duty-free imports.

"As far as economic ministers are concerned, we have made quite good progress and are quite confident we will be able to submit a set of proposals to the leaders," said Indonesian Economics Minister Ginjar Kartasasmita.

He said the measures being discussed were bold, considering there are "so many strong national interests."

"So to overcome national interests we have to convince them (individual countries)," he said.

Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Manh Cam said the "bold measures" would depend on the state of development of each country.

"These bold measures will be realised on the consideration of the conditions in each country, on the development in each country," he said.

ASEAN groups Brunei, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

Senior officials who met here this week approved the accelerated removal of trade and investment barriers to speed up the region's return to

the growth track.

Delegates said there were reservations among some members, citing the least-developed economies of Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam, on the proposals to speed up the pace of liberalisation.

They said some wanted to "go faster and some hold back," but most were on the middle ground.

All ASEAN economies have suffered as a result of the regional crisis sparked by the Thai baht's devaluation in July 1997.

Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Singapore are in recession while Brunei, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam have not been spared the fallout.

Under the ASEAN Free

Trade Area (AFTA) plan, the more developed members of ASEAN are to lower tariffs on most goods traded in the region to no more than five per cent by 2003, although officials say most of the reductions would take place by 2000.

Vietnam was given up to 2006, while Laos and Cambodia have up to 2008 to catch up.

Thai Foreign Minister Surin Pitsuwan said the regional crisis was a boon for efforts to open up trade.

"Right now, all the parties are very serious, committing themselves to this idea. I think this is a positive result of the crisis. Before the crisis this would not have been possible," he said.

Exchange Rates Saturday, 12-12-98										
CURRENCY	JORDAN DYNAR	SAUDI RYAL	UAE DIRHAM	BAHRAIN DYNAR	OMAN RYAL	QATAR RYAL	YEMEN RYAL	YEMEN RYAL	YEMEN RYAL	YEMEN RYAL
JORDAN DYNAR	1.0000	0.1886	0.1927	1.8778	1.8390	0.1944	2.3438	0.2077	0.2077	0.2077
SAUDI RYAL	5.3025	1.0000	1.0221	9.9573	9.7512	1.0308	12.4282	1.1074	1.1074	1.1074
UAE DIRHAM	5.1881	0.9784	1.0000	9.7425	9.5408	1.0067	12.1801	1.0779	1.0779	1.0779
BAHRAIN DYNAR	0.5325	0.1034	0.1026	1.0000	0.9793	0.1035	1.2482	0.1105	0.1105	0.1105
OMAN RYAL	0.5438	0.1026	0.1048	1.0211	1.0000	0.1067	1.2745	0.1126	0.1126	0.1126
QATAR RYAL	5.1434	0.9700	0.9814	9.6584	9.4584	1.0211	12.0552	1.0989	1.0989	1.0989
YEMEN RYAL	0.4267	0.0805	0.0822	0.8012	0.7846	0.0830	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
YEMEN RYAL	4.8143	0.9680	0.9290	9.0408	8.8538	0.9381	11.2845	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
YEMEN RYAL	21.4331	4.0516	4.1428	40.3416	39.5085	4.1769	50.3526	4.4621	4.4621	4.4621
YEMEN RYAL	1.4124	0.2864	0.2722	2.8523	2.5974	0.2746	3.3105	0.2834	0.2834	0.2834
YEMEN RYAL	0.6323	0.1577	0.1612	1.5703	1.5378	0.1626	1.9800	0.1737	0.1737	0.1737
YEMEN RYAL	2.3249	0.4384	0.4481	4.3657	4.2763	0.4320	5.4491	0.4820	0.4820	0.4820
YEMEN RYAL	1.9771	0.3540	0.3618	3.5249	3.4519	0.3560	4.3996	0.3689	0.3689	0.3689
YEMEN RYAL	7.8023	1.4714	1.5039	14.5514	14.3481	1.5170	18.2872	1.6288	1.6288	1.6288
YEMEN RYAL	1.6456	0.3108	0.3174	3.0925	3.0286	0.3202	3.8600	0.3421	0.3421	0.3421
YEMEN RYAL	2.6271	0.4954	0.5084	4.9333	4.8312	0.5108	5.1575	0.5457	0.5457	0.5457
YEMEN RYAL	11.2577	2.1306	2.1776	21.2153	20.7791	2.1966	26.4800	2.3456	2.3456	2.3456
YEMEN RYAL	23.0367	4.3445	4.4403	43.2592	42.3636	4.4789	53.9941	4.7846	4.7846	4.7846
YEMEN RYAL	48.1215	9.0752	9.2753	90.3642	88.4935	9.3560	112.7884	9.9650	9.9650	9.9650
YEMEN RYAL	2.2743	0.4293	0.4387	4.2745	4.1860	0.4406	5.3552	0.5689	0.5689	0.5689
YEMEN RYAL	3.8944	0.7516	0.7516	7.5255	7.3708	0.7581	9.3396	0.9989	0.9989	0.9989
YEMEN RYAL	2.8782	0.5426	0.5546	5.4049	5.2930	0.5596	6.7491	0.7075	0.7075	0.7075
YEMEN RYAL	15.4082	3.0844	3.1626	30.8118	30.1740	3.1902	38.4590	3.4080	3.4080	3.4080
YEMEN RYAL	2.1173	0.4108	0.4197	4.0885	4.0039	0.4233	5.1031	0.4522	0.4522	0.4522
YEMEN RYAL	1.1844	0.2234	0.2283	2.2242	2.1781	0.2303	2.7781	0.2460	0.2460	0.2460

MAJOR CURRENCIES AGAINST JORDAN DYNAR										
CURRENCY	US DOLLAR	GERMAN MARK	FRANCE FRANC	UNITED KINGDOM POUND	ITALY LIRA	NETHERLANDS GILDER	SPAIN PESAETA	PORTUGAL ESCUDO	GREECE DRACHMA	FINLAND MARKKA
US DOLLAR	1.0000	1.6690	0.6075	0.7524	0.1810	0.6576	0.2976	6.1312	1.1028	0.0064
GERMAN MARK	0.5921	1.0000	0.3597	0.4455	0.1072	0.5076	0.1783	3.9301	0.7070	0.0000
FRANCE FRANC	1.6460	2.7801	1.0000	1.2885	0.2980	1.4117	0.6849	10.0820	1.9629	0.0000
UNITED KINGDOM POUND	1.3290	2.2447	0.8074	1.0000	0.2406	1.1398	0.7145	8.1484	1.5946	0.0000
ITALY LIRA	5.2440	9.3550	3.3550	4.1555	1.0000	1.7355	0.8655	13.7655	2.7074	0.0000
NETHERLANDS GILDER	16.8000	19.8274	7.0584	8.7731	2.1107	1.0000	0.2682	7.1488	1.5974	0.0000
SPAIN PESAETA	1.6800	3.1415	1.1900	1.3985	0.3367	1.5882	1.0000	11.4040	2.2104	0.0000
PORTUGAL ESCUDO	7.9988	13.5100	4.8555	6.0197	1.4480	8.8600	4.3004	49.4242	9.2988	0.0000
GREECE DRACHMA	16.1000	27.5476	9.8088	12.2724	2.9526	13.8880	6.7888	1.0000	19.4460	0.0000
FINLAND MARKKA	34.0700	57.5442	20.8887	26.8556	6.1878	29.2198	16.3172	208.8000	40.2988	0.0000
AUSTRALIA DOLLAR	1.1916	2.7220	0.9791	1.2126	0.3291	1.3822	0.6865	9.8811	1.9276	0.0000
NEW ZEALAND DOLLAR	2.7688	4.8530	1.6773	2.0774	0.4996	2.3576	1.4843	18.8200	3.7900	0.0000
CYPRUS POUND	2.0578	3.4416	1.2380	1.5333	0.3689	1.7477	1.0056	12.4942	2.4200	0.0000
AUSTRIA SCHILLING	11.6170	19.6211	7.0577	8.7412	2.1030	9.8831	6.2457	71.2282	13.6533	0.0000
CANADA DOLLAR	1.5415	2.8036	0.9385	1.1598	0.2791	1.3220	0.6288	8.4513	1.6832	0.0000
EURO	0.6336	1.1454	0.4026	0.5010	0.1218	0.7192	0.4026	5.1415	1.0000	0.0000

CENTRAL BANK BULLETIN										
CURRENCY	US DOLLAR	GERMAN MARK	FRANCE FRANC	UNITED KINGDOM POUND	ITALY LIRA	NETHERLANDS GILDER	SPAIN PESAETA	PORTUGAL ESCUDO	GREECE DRACHMA	FINLAND MARKKA
US DOLLAR	1.0000	1.6690	0.6075	0.7524	0.1810	0.6576	0.2976	6.1312	1.1028	0.0064
GERMAN MARK	0.5921	1.0000	0.3597	0.4455	0.1072	0.5076	0.1783	3.9301	0.7070	0.0000
FRANCE FRANC	1.6460	2.7801	1.0000	1.2885	0.2980	1.4117	0.6849	10.0820	1.9629	0.0000
UNITED KINGDOM POUND	1.3290	2.2447	0.8074	1.0000	0.2406	1.1398	0.7145	8.1484	1.5946	0.0000
ITALY LIRA	5.2440	9.3550	3.3550	4.1555	1.0000	1.7355	0.8655	13.7655	2.7074	0.0000
NETHERLANDS GILDER	16.8000	19.8274	7.0584	8.7731	2.1107	1.0000	0.2682	7.1488	1.5974	0.0000
SPAIN PESAETA	1.6800	3.1415	1.1900	1.3985	0.3367	1.5882	1.0000	11.4040	2.2104	0.0000
PORTUGAL ESCUDO	7.9988	13.5100	4.8555	6.0197	1.4480	8.8600	4.3004	49.4242	9.2988	0.0000
GREECE DRACHMA	16.1000	27.5476	9.8088	12.2724	2.9526	13.8880	6.7888	1.0000	19.4460	0.0000
FINLAND MARKKA	34.0700	57.5442	20.8887	26.8556	6.1878	29.2198	16.3172	208.8000	40.2988	0.0000
AUSTRALIA DOLLAR	1.1916	2.7220	0.9791	1.2126	0.3291	1.3822	0.6865	9.8811	1.9276	0.0000
NEW ZEALAND DOLLAR	2.7688	4.8530	1.6773	2.0774	0.4996	2.3576	1.4843	18.8200	3.7900	0.0000
CYPRUS POUND	2.0578	3.4416	1.2380	1.5333	0.3689	1.7477	1.0056	12.4942	2.4200	0.0000
AUSTRIA SCHILLING	11.6170	19.6211	7.0577	8.7412	2.1030	9.8831	6.2457	71.2282	13.6533	0.0000
CANADA DOLLAR	1.5415	2.8036	0.9385	1.1598	0.2791	1.3220	0.6288	8.4513	1.6832	0.0000
EURO	0.6336	1.1454	0.4026	0.5010	0.1218	0.7192	0.4026	5.1415	1.0000	0.0000

NOW OPEN

Victoria's secret

Polo Ralph Lauren Eddie Bauer J. Charles

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Lower House deputies will propose lower customs duties on cars during budget debate

**** ACCORDING TO** parliamentary sources, a number of deputies will propose lowering customs duties on cars during the coming sessions that will debate the 1999 budget. The proposal would be a partial reduction of customs duties against raising other taxes in order to compensate the financial differences in the budget.

When asked for a response to such a suggestion, Finance Minister Michael Maro said: "At present there is no intention to reduce customs duties on cars but if the subject is brought up it would be open for a study as other ideas which were floated." The minister added that the issue of cars is extremely sensitive and "I stress that until this very moment, the government did not think in this direction especially when any reduction in customs duties should be compensated in other forms," Maro concluded his comment by emphasizing that this idea or any other idea

is open for study.

Towards the end of every year, rumours circulate in the car market of the government's intention to lower customs duties on cars. But such a reduction must be countered by an increase in the sales tax as the Kingdom's budget relies heavily on customs and taxes on cars for revenue.

The car market in Jordan is volatile as it is affected by any information that circulates regarding customs duties. Successive governments have at many occasions intervened to rescue the car market from a phoney recession by denying information that leaked about possible reduction in customs.

Economic experts see a distortion in the equation for collecting customs on cars as the customs are estimated according to the size of the engines/consumption of fuel and not on the value of the cars at the country of origin as internationally calculated (Al Dustour).

Lower oil income will affect flow of remittances from Jordanian expatriates

**** THE CONTINUED** decline in the prices of oil will directly affect the Arab Gulf markets and any economic or financial changes there will cause a drop in investment and shrink employment opportunities for foreign workers including the Jordanian labour, said Haidar Rashid, president of the association of employees in banks, insurance firms and accounting offices. He indicated that whether the number of Jordanian workers is reduced or their salaries cut, the volume of foreign cur-

rency transfers from the expatriates will drop.

Fakhri Bilbeisi, a former banker and a well-known economic analyst, agrees that the drop in oil prices will mainly affect the Arab Gulf countries but he said Jordan will only suffer from a drop in remittances. The decline in the flow of foreign exchange from the expatriates will result in a shortage of hard currency which, if not compensated, would affect the Kingdom's reserves (Al Arab Al Yawm).

Coca Cola prophesies below par profits for 1998, gains marketing rights to Cadbury Schweppes

By Dan Sewell
Associated Press

ATLANTA — Coca Cola, its sales pinched by overseas economic problems, gave a gloomy prediction about profits, but also announced a deal allowing it to sell Cadbury Schweppes brands like Dr Pepper and Crush outside the United States.

Coke on Friday revealed the \$1.85 billion marketing agreement with British-based Cadbury in London. It gives Coke marketing rights to Cadbury brands in 120 countries.

Hours later in New York, chairman and CEO M. Douglas Ivester told analysts that fourth-quarter earnings will likely be 24 to 25 cents per share, falling short of Wall Street estimates of 30 cents and a 1997 fourth-quarter per-

formance of 33 cents per share.

Coke's stock fell \$3.19 to \$62.88 a share on the New York Stock Exchange, adding to a steady decline in the second half of this year after hitting a 52-week high of \$88.94 per share.

"The fundamental strengths of our business model and our long-term opportunities and strategic approach remain intact throughout the world," Ivester said.

"However, during the fourth quarter, we have seen a pattern of volatility in many markets that has resulted from continued economic and political activity."

Ivester's gloomy projection for analysts was the second straight quarter of bad news from the Coke chief, who's in his 14th month at the top after succeeding the late Roberto

C. Goizueta.

After a strong first half of the year for Coke, global economic problems that started in Southeast Asia and spread to other previously growing overseas Coke markets such as Russia, Japan, and Brazil have taken their toll. Coke estimated Friday that besides double-digit drops in volume in some countries, currency problems in volatile markets are cutting results 10 per cent.

Analysts in New York quizzed Ivester about the Cadbury Schweppes acquisition, which received generally good reviews as a way for Coke to build up overseas business. The deal doesn't affect Cadbury Schweppes brands in the United States, France and South Africa.

John Sicher, editor-publisher of the trade publication Beverage Digest, called it a

good deal for both companies.

"Critical mass is very important in the soft drink business," Sicher said. "Cadbury Schweppes has some very good brands outside the U.S., but their business is very small. This gives them a substantial amount of money ... and it gives Coke the opportunity to build some good brands through its worldwide bottler system."

John Sunderland, chief executive of Cadbury Schweppes, said the company might use the funds for acquisitions.

"It creates immediate and substantial value for shareholders and gives us enormous flexibility at a time of uncertainty in world markets," he said.

Sunderland said the company decided to sell the brands

because it lacked distribution systems needed to make a multinational beverage operation succeed, and wanted to focus on expanding its worldwide candy interests and improving its 15 per cent share of the \$55 billion U.S. soft drink industry.

The deal also widens Coke's beverage diversity, with Schweppes and Canada Dry tonic waters, club sodas and ginger ales included.

"These agreements will allow the Coca-Cola Co. to participate in segments of the beverage business where it currently does not have meaningful entries," Ivester said.

Completion of Friday's deal is subject to regulatory review in a number of countries, but is expected by the middle of next year, Coke said.

Triple whammy knocks down Russia's Asia free trade zone

NAKHODKA (AFP) — Nikolai Fyodorov, 39, oversees one third of Russia's foreign cargo trade from his elite offices seven time zones east of Moscow.

But the easy-going lover of young Italian wine and old jazz has been looking grim these days; he recently took three ugly beatings.

"We were the very first people on earth to feel the Asia flu," began Fyodorov, head of the Nakhodka Free Economic Trade Zone, in reference to the economic downturn in the Far East.

The quasi-state body governs Russia's second largest port, a jumble of rusty cranes and wharfs that nestles in a quiet bay under razor-sharp mountain ridges hanging over the Sea of Japan.

The bug that hit Asia took out 85 per cent of all South Korean enterprises trading

with Russia through the Nakhodka port, Fyodorov said. That helped slash annual volume here from 30 million tonnes to less than 10 million.

Moscow dealt Nakhodka the next blow last August when it let go of the ruble exchange rate and effectively folded the banking sector, making imports to Russia too expensive.

"All of our merry dances came to a complete standstill when the ruble crashed," Fyodorov sighed as he lit a cigarette. Worse yet, the Russian parliament is scheming to strip Nakhodka of its free economic zone status. Some nationalist deputies think giving a region the right to have its own duties system smacks of separatism.

Shaking his head, Fyodorov hinted that he has recently placed his own man in the Russian finance ministry to

keep Nakhodka's duty free privileges intact.

"I expect interesting ideas from this government about lowering taxes," he said. Either way, this was not how things were meant to go for Russia's first experiment with a true free trade zone on the Pacific rim which, in theory, should have rivalled the likes of Shanghai.

It was launched in 1990 by Soviet managers who in their waning hours decided to nudge open Communist doors to free trade.

But that free trade status was never formally approved or revoked by the new Russian government, leaving Nakhodka to make up its own rules as it went along.

To this day, Fyodorov admits, Nakhodka has two conflicting city administrations — the new free trade zone and the old city authori-

ties. "We still don't clearly know who is in charge of what," he lamented.

This paper work shuffle can hardly be afforded by Nakhodka, which currently has only enough fuel to last until January 15. If no new supplies come before then this city of 220,000 souls will go cold and dark.

It would not be the first time: two years ago, the free trade zone grabbed national headlines for closing its schools for the winter.

The locals care little about who's running things as long as they just get the basics. "They have to give us heat and light, that's what they're there for," said one pensioner waiting at the bus stop.

"If they also managed to get some people some jobs that's good, but that's for later. First, let's get everyone heat and light."

But compared to neighbouring Russian far east cities — Parizansk, built on a spluttering coal mine, or Ayseneyev, that houses a coughing military-industrial machine — Nakhodka looks like it still stands a chance.

On the city's main artery that bends 25 kilometres (15 miles) around Nakhodka's bay, cheerful vendors sell crates of freshly caught fish and warble amicably about the weather.

They stare out at a port, built from scratch by the Soviet authorities in 1945, that stands second only to one on the opposite side of Russia, in Saint Petersburg.

Fyodorov, meanwhile, thinks the free trade zone may eventually pull through if it gets a bit of investment — from Moscow. "If they help us build nice hotels, a satellite phone system, the businessmen will come," he said.

Kuwait rejects call for temporary oil production cut

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — Kuwait's oil minister on Saturday said the emirate would not support calls for a temporary halt in crude oil production over winter in an attempt to boost sagging prices.

Sheikh Nasser Al-Sabah, quoted by the official KUNA news agency, dismissed the suggestion as "a personal interpretation, simply an attempt by some countries to increase oil prices."

The chairman of the Organisation of Arab Petroleum

Exporting Countries (OAPEC), meeting in Cairo on Saturday, called on OPEC producers to agree on a temporary halt to crude exports to help boost prices.

OAPEC Chairman and Libyan Oil Minister Abdallah Salem Al-Badri said OAPEC would work with OPEC to "seek a total halt to oil exports for a certain period."

"There are huge quantities of oil on the market (today) and steps must be taken to ensure that more is not placed on the

market even if these means a total halt in OPEC oil exports," he said.

The 10-member OAPEC groups OPEC members Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest oil producer, Algeria, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, along with non-OPEC members Bahrain, Egypt and Syria.

OPEC members met in Vienna in November but came away from the summit with no clear decision on whether to deepen production cuts or extend existing ones, which are valid until June next year.

But Gulf Arab leaders meeting this week in Abu Dhabi agreed between them to extend existing pledged cuts until the end of 1999, maintaining some 1.285 million barrels per day of global production.

Crude oil prices slipped to an all-time low in Britain and the United States this week, undermined by burgeoning supply, record stock levels and low demand.

On Thursday, benchmark Brent crude prices hit \$9.17 per barrel on London's International Petroleum Exchange, the lowest since it began trading there in June 1988.

Investors spooked by poor earnings projections

NEW YORK (AP) — The earnings pre-announcement season, which occurs at the end of every quarter and hit full stride this past week, is a bit like going to a horror film.

Investors know they're going to be scared by companies saying their upcoming earnings reports aren't going to be great. But they don't yet know who the knife-wielding guy in the shower is, and they don't know when he'll pounce.

This quarter, the thrill seekers are getting their money's worth. A steady stream of high-profile multinational companies have warned that the recession in Southeast Asia and economic instability in Latin America have depressed overseas sales, and, by extension, fourth-quarter and 1999 earnings.

"This is typical," said Bob Dickey, managing director of technical analysis at Dain Rauscher Wessels in Minneapolis.

"Every quarter, before the quarter ends, we have some companies that are preparing investors for some negative surprise, and that kind of spooks people into looking for bigger problems out there."

It would be difficult to find bigger problems. Four companies in the elite Dow industrials index announced this past week they wouldn't meet earnings expectations.

On Friday, Coca-Cola Co. pegged its fourth-quarter earnings at 24 cents to 25 cents a share, below analysts' expected 30 cents, because of slower growth in worldwide sales. On Thursday, Swedish telecommunications giant LM Ericsson AB, said 1998 sales and profits would disappoint.

On Wednesday, J.P. Morgan and Co. said fourth-quarter operating earnings will be lower than in the third quarter,

when it earned 58 cents a share, and well below analysts' expectations of \$1.03 a share. Merck and Co. said its 1999 earnings wouldn't hit analysts' numbers.

On Tuesday, it was chemical maker Union Carbide Corp.'s turn. It issued a fourth-quarter earnings warning for the second time, having already said on Oct. 26 that poor sales in Asia would crimp fourth-quarter results.

Stock investors responded as if they had never heard that Japan's economy is in tatters and the Brazil is on the brink. The Dow Jones industrials lost 194.58 points for the week, closing Friday's session, after a 19.82 daily loss, at 8,821.76.

The Dow is now 552.51 below its closing high of 9,374.27 on Nov. 23, but up 11.6 per cent for the calendar year. Charles Hill, director of Research at First Call Corp., is one analyst who believes

investors should be worried about corporate earnings.

Recessions abroad cut demand for U.S. exports, lowering sales of multinationals, Hill noted. They also prompt those countries to try to export their way out of their recession by flooding the U.S. market with relatively cheap imports, Hill said. "We see container ships going out empty and coming back from Asia full."

U.S. companies are forced to lower their own prices to meet cheap foreign competitors, at the same time that an extremely low 4.4 per cent unemployment rate prevents them from lowering wages. The result, Hill said, is a powerful squeeze on margins and a hit to earnings.

As if that weren't enough, the dollar weakened in the fourth quarter, so when multinational companies translate their international sales figures into dol-

lars, the translated figures will be lower, said Hill, who thinks 1999 earnings will be up "at best, 4 per cent," compared with industry analysts' expectations of 19 per cent.

But that's still higher than 1998 earnings, which are projected to rise about 2.8 per cent.

Analysts and traders concede that the current earnings picture does not support the current valuations in the stock market, where the S and P 500 issues are trading at an unprecedented rich multiple of 25 times projected 1999 earnings.

But White, for one, is emerging from the horror movie stunned, but not terrified. "It's very hard, historically, to drive the market lower in December," White said. "With stock gains still quite decent for the year, stock fund managers don't want to exit the year showing significant amounts of cash in their portfolios," White said.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SUNDAY, DECEMBER 13, 1998

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) If you're interested in a relationship, this would be a good time to establish one. You might find yourself doing it without even meaning to. You do a lot of things without really meaning to, which is why your life is such an adventure.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You may have to push yourself to get something done by tomorrow, but that's OK. It'll be good for you. The more you push yourself, the more creative you are. If you think you have plenty of time, you get lazy, and that ensures that you won't have plenty of time. It's a vicious cycle. Don't fall into that trap.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Fun, games, romance, kids, old friends, relatives, you name it, they're all in the mix today. In fact, they're probably waiting for you right now. The party can't start until you get there, because you're bringing all the good jokes. You're also in charge of animated conversations about interesting topics. They try when you're not there, but it's never quite the same.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 22) Your place is probably a showplace. Even if your line of work is Parent, or Grandparent, you're still a good interior decorator. That's because home is the most important place in the world for you. Save some special time for yourself and one other person late tonight. Tonight you need to be Sweetheart.

LEO: (July 23 to August 22) You continue to be a shining star of intellectual ability today. You are captivating, brilliant, charming and even coercive. You can talk people into doing just about anything you want, and that is marvellous. Be sure to use this skill, or let's say gift, responsibly. Don't talk people into doing anything that would be bad for them.

VIRGO: (August 23 to September 22) You could get an unexpected legacy today, from an old friend or an old insurance policy you forgot about. It could even be an old ten dollar bill you find in the parking lot. Stranger things have happened, and it looks like they will right now. So definitely pay attention while you're out there.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 23) You're coming up with interesting things to say today, and that's why so many people are hanging on your every word. They're interested in how you think, and it looks like you're doing a good job of educating them, too.

SCORPIO: (October 24 to November 21) You could do an extra job or sell something and bring a little more money into your account. This is a productive time of year for you. If you've got anything to sell, put it out on the front steps with a big sign. As lucky as you are right now, you might not even have to put out the sign.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Somebody you love cares about you too, and it shouldn't be hard for both of you to express your feelings. Go ahead and do that. Looks like several really good friends could pop into your life today as well. It wouldn't hurt to do the same with them.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 19) Your expertise is required today, but the person needing your advice the most doesn't even know it. In fact, that person might not even know he or she is making a mistake until you point it out. If you're not careful, you could create more problems than you solve. Do it with love.

AQUARIUS: (January 20 to February 18) You're in a fabulous mood, and so is everybody else. You want to try new things and challenge yourself. You're not only doing this intellectually, but also physically. You're at least you should be. That's the push you're getting from your planetary influence. Today is perfect for moving projects from "can't do" to "can do."

PISCES: (February 19 to March 20) You have so many people to think about, you sometimes overlook your own wants and needs. Pisceans are very tuned in to others. It's one of your most endearing qualities, but you don't have to take it to excess. Do something you enjoy today. It'll make your generosity seem less like a sacrifice, and that's good for everybody.

JORDAN MARKETPLACE *** JORDAN MARKETPLACE *** JORDAN MARKETPLACE

DAJANI JEWELLERS A Stress - free Christmas

Many villas and apartments for rent and sale

Furnished & Unfurnished

For more information call:

Abdoun Real Estate

5920605/5920609/079/530007

Web Site is www.abdoun.com.jo

STUDIO HAIG

Professional quality in 1 hour service

Develop your colour film at our shop and get:

- * JUMBO photo size 30% larger.
- * Free enlargement 20 x 30 cm.

Shmelsani - Opposite Grindleys Bank.

Phone: 5604042

Sweiffish Tel: 822891

Your Address In Amman

CRYSTAL

Quality Serviced Suites

- * One & Two Bedrooms * Fully Equipped Kitchens * Daily & Long Stay * Reasonable Rates

5th Circle

Tel.: 5692672 - Fax: 5674551

e-mail: crystal@gozom.jo

DIPLOMAT

Rent a Car

There's absolutely no Price like our price.

Call Us Now

5510427,8,9

FOR RENT

Deluxe Villas and Apartments

SANABEL Real Estate

SWEIFIYEH

A. Hajarat Complex

Tel. 5864230 - 5865167

Mobile: 079/537588

The Arts Center

Accredited Studio & Workshop Courses

Register Now

Tel. 5529610

TO ADVERTISE IN THIS SECTION CALL

5684311 - 5699634 EXT. 42

Fax: 5693337

TO ADVERTISE IN THIS SECTION CALL

5684311 - 5699634 EXT. 42

Fax: 5693337

Amra forum Hotel

At 6th Circle Tel.: 5510001

Recreation Center

Be Good Look Good

our team will look after your looks.

your Friendly Host

Asian Games

Abu Khadijeh assured of bronze, looks for Jordan's 1st gold medal

Disappointing results in swimming, shooting and bowling as athletics competition begins today

By Aileen Bannayan
in Amman and Jordan sports
media reporters in Bangkok

JORDAN'S MOHAMMAD Abu Khadijeh Saturday assured himself a bronze medal after he won his boxing bout without much effort at the 13th Asian Games, currently underway in Bangkok.

Abu Khadijeh, who won three gold medals within a year — at the 8th Pan-Arab Games, the West Asian Games in Tehran and the 18th Arab Boxing Championships in Tunisia, eliminated his Palestinian opponent in 1 minute 18 seconds before the referee stopped the match.

"I'll be looking to knock out Pakistan's Mirza Mazhar tomorrow. My aim is not a bronze medal, I want to win Jordan's first Asian gold medal," Abu Khadijeh said.

Also Sunday, the athletics competition gets underway with Fakhreddin Fuad — a high jump gold medalist at the Pan-Arab Games — hoping to be among medal winners.

The team had a training camp in Qatar where Fuad achieved 215 centimetres, and just came short of his record of 222.

Teammate Mohammad Abdul Baqi set a new Jordanian record in the triple jump with 15.53 — 18 centimetres more than his previous mark.

Mohammad Mutari will be taking part in the 1,500 metres and Mohammad Shaman in the 400 metres.

In a surprising move, Jordanian delegation officials returned home Stadi Ka'kur, who was supposed to compete in the 200 and 400 metres.

The explanation was that Ka'kur insisted that his Chinese coach be at the village during training, after

he was not allowed in because his name was not listed among Jordan's delegation.

Ka'kur told reporters that officials failed to issue the coach's pass to be present while training. Athletics team officials then decided to return Ka'kur home for failing to comply with delegation regulations.

Meanwhile, Jordan continued competition in other events failing to score advanced results in shooting, swimming and bowling where Jordan came just before last.

In swimming, Hana Majaj had disappointing results that lagged far off from her local records. Majaj finished last in the 200 metre butterfly with a time of 2:40.85 while her local time was 2:26.

Pan-Arab Games bronze medalist Majaj also came in 18th with a time 1:13.16 in the 100-metre butterfly, also far off her local time.

She attributed the results to "lack of training, and the absence of a planned annual agenda." Her coach also said that swimmers trained in a 25-metre pool instead of a 50-metre one.

Jordan has so far won four medals — all in taekwondo. Ibrahim Agel, Ala' Kutkut, and Hussein Tahleb won silver. Mohammad Farajeh won bronze.

The karate team which includes Pan-Arab Games karate bronze medalist Butheina Mahsiri, arrived in Bangkok Saturday as over half of Jordan's 56-member delegation prepared to return home Sunday.

The Kingdom took part alongside 40 other countries (only Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan missed the event) in the last sporting event of the century with 19 officials and 37 athletes.

Jordan competed in 11 sports:

athletics, boxing, bowling, gymnastics, judo, karate, shooting, squash, swimming, weightlifting and taekwondo.

Although the Jordan Olympic Committee (JOC) carefully screened each participating federation's athletes and preparations to enlist the best athletes in each sport, apart from taekwondo so far, the rest of the sports produced disappointing results.

In boxing, Basel Hindawi, bronze medalist at the Pan-Arab Games, and gold medalist Ayman Nadi failed to earn medals for Jordan as they competed alongside 180 athletes from 31 nations in the event.

In squash, the country's top player Mohammad Saeed lost 3-0 in the quarterfinals to one of Pakistan's top players — Zarak Khan, Jordan's Majd Njada also lost 3-0 to a player from Hong Kong.

In taekwondo, Nancy Hindi, Zaha Talhouini, Luma Abu Judum, Ali Asmar, Alisar Matar, Mohammad Abul Ruz and Ahlam Bino lost their bouts. The rest of their teammates secured Jordan's four medals so far.

In judo, Mousa Khalaf, a silver medalist at the Pan-Arab Games, was eliminated, alongside Rami Dasouqi and Tawfiq Suleiman.

In gymnastics, Jordan's Ahmad Abdo and Shadi Khouri obtained 45th and 47th places respectively.

In shooting, Aysar Hiyari failed to qualify as did the rest of his teammates.

In weightlifting, the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) reprimanded the Jordan Olympic Committee after the country's top weightlifter, Ayed Khawaldeh, became the first athlete to test positive at the Bangkok Games.

He was found to have taken the

Country	G	S	B	total
China	70	47	30	147
Japan	26	30	36	92
South Korea	24	16	28	68
Kazakhstan	12	12	16	40
Chinese Taipei	9	5	16	30
Thailand	10	16	19	45
North Korea	4	9	4	17
Iran	3	4	7	14
Malaysia	3	4	5	12
Mongolia	2	0	5	7
Uzbekistan	1	7	8	16
Vietnam	1	2	4	7
Kuwait	1	2	2	5
Indonesia	1	1	6	8
Pakistan	1	0	1	2
Turkmenistan	1	0	0	1
Jordan	0	3	1	4
Myanmar	0	2	1	3
Kyrgyzstan	0	2	0	2
Philippines	0	1	6	7
Nepal	0	1	2	3
Singapore	0	1	5	6
India	0	1	2	3
Hong Kong	0	1	5	6
Syria	0	0	1	1
UAE	0	0	1	1

diuretic Triamterene in a random test after setting a new Arab record finishing seventh among fifteen participants in the 56-kilogramme class.

Khawaldeh, who was the first Jordanian to win three bronze medals in one event at the 8th Pan-Arab Games in Beirut last summer, said his Chinese coach has instructed him to take the medicine during the West Asian Games in Tehran and during another championship in Algeria last year, and did not know that it contained a banned substance.

He was immediately disqualified and expelled from the Games village by the OCA which held an emergency meeting and handed the matter to the sport's governing body to impose international sus-

pension which will bar him from the Pan-Arab Games.

He returned home after Jordanian delegation officials ordered his return following a second positive test. He is expected to serve a two-year suspension.

Jordan is yet to win gold at the Asian Games. In the past two participations in the Seoul '86 and Hiroshima '94, Jordan's sole medals were achieved through taekwondo with three silver and five bronze medals.

The Kingdom did not taking part in team sports — notably soccer, handball and basketball due to reason pertaining to their respective federations.

LOCAL SPORTS SCENE



Officials discuss Pan-Arab Games ceremonies

AMMAN — Minister of Youth Talal Safaan Al Hassan and Minister of Education Fawzi Gharabeh Saturday received Egyptian expert Hamid Abdul Khaleq who is in charge of setting up a preliminary scheme for the opening and closing ceremonies of the 9th Pan-Arab Games, which will be held in Amman Aug.15-31, 1999. Cultural aspects from the Jordanian heritage are expected to be included in the two ceremonies. Games Director Isam Aridah and senior officials from both ministries attended the meeting.

Futsal team returns home

AMMAN — The national futsal team has returned home after taking part in the 1st Arab Futsal Championship in Cairo. Jordan beat Algeria but was defeated by the Libyan and Moroccan teams. Palestine, Sudan, Somalia and Egypt took part in the event.

Cycling training camp cancelled

AMMAN — A cycling training camp in Egypt for the national team was cancelled after Egypt declined to host the event. The camp was part of the team's preparation for the next summer's 9th Pan-Arab Games.

Compiled by Ahmad Khaliq

Iran beat China but both reach soccer quarters

BANGKOK (AFP) — German based duo Ali Daei and Karim Bagheri came to Iran's Asian Games rescue as they inspired their side to a hard won but well deserved 2-1 victory over China on Saturday.

The win saved Iran's blushes and kept them in the tournament while the defeat was China's first of the competition.

Iran were staring elimination in the face after losing to Oman in the opening round of games in the second phase and a win against the Chinese was essential if Mahmoud Pourghaderi's side were to keep their gold medal quest a reality.

It all looked to be falling apart for Iran, however, after just 10 minutes when Li Jinyu pounced on a loose ball to give China the lead.

But two goals in three minutes, first from Bagheri and then from Daei, gave Iran a lead they were never to relinquish.

"Any win in any match makes us happy," said Pourghaderi after the game. "We had to get three points from this game because of the situation we put ourselves in."

"The win was the only thing we were going for. All of the players knew they had to win against the Chinese because we were in a bad situation in the group."

"We made it difficult for ourselves with the result against Oman."

The 4-2 defeat to Oman was a low point in what has been a successful two-year period for Iranian football.

In 1996 they made the semi-finals of the Asian Cup and last year they came through Asia's qualifying tournament and a play-off with Australia to qualify for their first World Cup finals in 20 years. In France they were the only Asian side to record a victory when they defeated the USA 2-1 in Lyon.

On their way to qualifying the Iranians inflicted two heavy defeats on the Chinese and many were calling for revenge in the match between the pair.

But China's coach, Englishman Bobby Houghton, said revenge was not on his team's mind.

"Most of my team were too young to play in that game so they weren't thinking about those games last year," said Houghton. China lost 4-2 to Iran in Dalian after leading 2-0 and then went to Tehran where they were felled to a 4-1 scoreline.

"We didn't play to lose today and we've finished top of the group so that two groups we've won. It's been a good week, we've put in even and good performances in all of our games."

"We lost 2-1 to a good team and it's no disgrace to lose to that team but we can now look forward to the quarter-finals."

The Chinese will face Turkmenistan while Iran, who finished ahead of Oman thanks to the win over China, will come up against defending champions Uzbekistan in the quarter-finals.

Host nation Thailand also reached the quarter-finals despite going down 2-1 to Qatar. Qatar's win booked them their spot and put them top of the group.

The quarter-final qualifiers are Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, South Korea, Kuwait, China, Iran, Qatar, Thailand.

For two athletes, countdown to fame or oblivion starts

BANGKOK (AP) — For two famed Asian women athletes — P.T. Usha of India and Susantika Jayasinghe of Sri Lanka — the countdown to fame or oblivion starts with Asian Games track events beginning Sunday.

If Usha, mother of a six-year-old son, wins even a bronze in her favourite 400 metres, the 33-year-old athlete will retire from international competition with added glory. Her name will be enshrined in India's book of athletic legends, which is very thin for a nation of 980 million people. No Indian has ever won an Olympics medal in track and field.

If Jayasinghe, 23, wins at either 100 or 200 metres, it will bring resurrection in her sport and lift her image in Sri Lanka, a nation of 18.5 million people off India's southern coast.

Jayasinghe, the youngest of five daughters who grew up on the rubber plantations of central Sri Lanka, is considered outrageously frank.

When she returned home after the 1997 World Track Championships at Athens with a silver ahead of Jamaican runner Merlene Ottey, she made the war-scarred nation proud. She was given money and a

three-bedroom flat in Colombo, and was honoured by President Chandrika Kumaratunga, a woman.

But the good times did not last long. She raised a storm by accusing unnamed Sri Lankan sports officials of sexual harassment.

Then she had to undergo an out-of-competition drug test, which turned out positive for a banned substance.

She told The Associated Press that she feared her urine sample had been tampered with. She said it was part of an effort to defame her and end her career in retaliation for her accusations.

"I am really working hard to win a medal in Bangkok and I will prove I don't cheat anyone," she says.

Still, a medal here will not end the drug issue.

Track and field's world governing body, the International Amateur Athletic Federation, referred her doping case to arbitration after a Sri Lankan panel cleared her by a 2-1 verdict. Jayasinghe says she only took a drug to control her menstrual cycle.

If the next ruling goes against Jayasinghe, any medal she wins at Bangkok will be taken away.

For India's Usha, a medal of any colour means a lot.

"It looks like Usha is carrying the entire burden of India," said Sabita Nagpal, an Indian resident in Bangkok and an avid follower of Indian performance at the games.

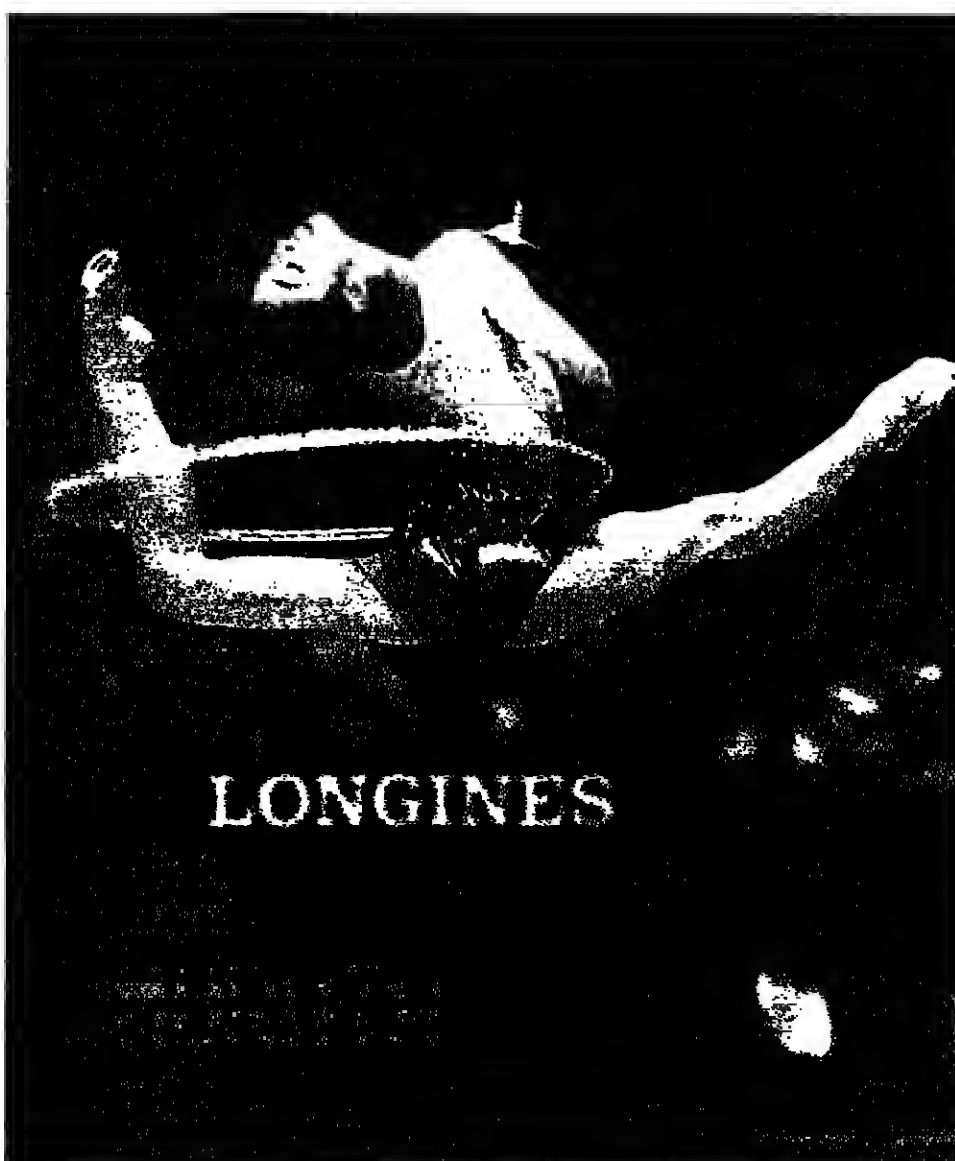
Usha has come the closest of any Indian to winning an Olympic track medal, missing bronze by 0.01 seconds in the 400-metre hurdles at the 1984 Games.

She won silver at 100 and 200 metres in the 1982 Asian Games in New Delhi, and one year later, she won gold in the 400 in the Asian Championships in Kuwait and a silver in the 200.

In July, the Indian railroad official surprised everyone by coming out of eight years of athletic retirement to run in the Asian Track Championships in Fukuoka, Japan.

She was third in the 200 metres and, on the same day, anchored India's victorious 4 x 100-metre relay. Usha also anchored India's silver medal team in the 4 x 400.

On the difficult road back, preliminary heats start Sunday for both Usha and Jayasinghe.



Japan's Yukari Murata performs with the hoop during the team rhythmic gymnastics at the 13th Asian Games in Bangkok. Japan is currently leading on points with China placed second and North Korea third (AFP photo)

TODAY AT	CINEMA TEL:463-4144	CINEMA TEL:463-4144	CINEMA TEL:509228	CINEMA TEL:5077420	CINEMA TEL:5934793	CINEMA TEL:5934793	Hisham Yanes Theatre TEL: 4651515
	PHILADELPHIA '1'	PHILADELPHIA '2'	PLAZA	CONCORDE	GALLERIA 1	GALLERIA 2	
	Richard Gere .. in RED CORNER	Jeff Bridges .. in WHITE SQUALL	Comedian Mohammad Huneidi .. in SAEEDI AT THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY	CONCORDE "I" Patrick Swayze .. in the action-packed film BLACK DOG Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30 CONCORDE "II" FAIR GAME Shows: 3:30, 5:30	ABDOUN www.cns.com.jo/Galleria Antonio Banderas .. in THE MASK OF ZORRO Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	ABDOUN www.cns.com.jo/Galleria Comedian Mohammad Huneidi .. in SAEEDI AT THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY Shows: 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30	Watch out for the new play

Listings for films and showing times as received by cinemas and their advertising agencies.

Sports

Norway's
Jus
akes
downhill

IOC dec

Zarak Khar
Asiad squa

DUTY FREE C
SAAB 900
MILEAGE: 4
COLOR: BLU
LEATHER INTERIO
TEL: 56

JORDAN
FAX: 56

Norway's Kjus takes downhill

VAL-D'ISERE, France (AFP) — Norway's Lasse Kjus won the first men's World Cup downhill of the season here on Saturday finishing in a time of 1 minute 43.20 seconds.

The 27-year-old, who was winning his eighth World Cup race and fourth downhill, beat Italian Luca Cantaneo by 0.28 seconds and another Italian Erik Solto finished in third 0.44 seconds back.

Kjus, who had not bothered to go to the aborted downhill race at Whistler Mountain last weekend, produced his astonishing run from the 24th starting position on a piste, which had been shortened because of fears over a possible avalanche.

Norway's dual silver medalist from this year's Olympics destroyed the race of France's Olympic champion and long time leader Jean-Luc Cretier by a margin of 1.44 seconds - leaving Cretier still without a win in World Cup competition.

The two Italians surged from the neither regions of the starters to secure two unlikely podium positions with Cantaneo gaining his first ever top three position in a downhill.

The Italians joy was in stark contrast to the powerful Austrian team, who had only 15th placed Norbert Holzknecht in the top 16 finishing positions.



Rennes' Cedric Bardon (R) battles with Montpellier's Manuel Dos Santos (C) in a French D1 match at Route de Lorient Stadium. Rennes won the match 3-2 (AFP Photo)

'Flying Dutchwoman' cracks two more European records

SHEFFIELD (AFP) — Inge De Bruijn of the Netherlands broke two more European short course records here on Saturday at the European championships — to take her total to three for the competition.

De Bruijn, nicknamed the 'Flying Dutchwoman', broke the 50 metres freestyle record swimming a time of 24.38 seconds to beat the old mark of 24.62 set by German swimmer Sandra Volker in Gothenburg on April 18 1997.

Only minutes earlier she had posted a time of 57.93 seconds to beat the old 100 metres butterfly mark of 58.39secs set by Slovakian Martina Moravcova on December 4 in College Station, Texas.

On Friday De Bruijn had broken her own European 50m butterfly short course record — twice.

De Bruijn clocked 26.54sec to slice 0.07sec off the mark she established at a meeting in Italy last March as she cruised into the final.

She then promptly bettered that performance by 0.45sec when clocking 26.09 in the afternoon.

IOC decide against rewriting history

LAUSANNE (R) — Olympic chiefs have decided against rewriting the results of past Games in the light of doping revelations in the former East Germany.

After studying requests from four American swimmers and British swimmer Sharron Davies, who were beaten by former GDR competitors, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) said on Saturday that changing the results would pose more legal problems.

"I would say that you have to rule out the reallocation of medals," IOC director general Francois Carrard said after an IOC executive board meeting discussed the requests. "It would create a lot of new judicial problems."

Carrard added, however, that the IOC would be looking into other ways of resolving the issue.

The GDR ran a systematic programme of drug-taking. Two trials in Berlin this year have highlighted the

doping abuse.

The IOC dealt with requests to change the results of the U.S. women's 4X100 metres medal relay squad who finished second at the 1976 Games behind the East Germans.

Davies finished second in the 400 individual medley at the 1980 Games behind East German Petra Schneider, who has since conceded she unknowingly took drugs.

Zarak Khan wins Asian squash gold

At Asian Games, smoking is all the rage

BANGKOK (AFP) — Zarak Jahan Khan made a spectacular comeback in an all-Pakistani squash final against Amjad Khan to win the Asian Games singles title here on Saturday.

Zarak fought back from a 2-1 deficit to take the last two games in a marathon battle against his fancied opponent. Zarak won 1-9, 9-0, 6-9, 9-7, 9-3 to hand Pakistan their second gold of the Games after Shokat Ali's victory in the snooker singles final on Tuesday.

Malaysia's Nicol-Ana David underlined her status as Asia's leading player by winning the women's title. David, the Asian and SEA Games champion, thrashed Hong Kong's Rebecca Chiu 9-3, 9-1, 9-6.

Zarak played strongly to match Amjad, nephew of Pakistani great Jansher Khan and himself a top 50 player. The bronze was shared by the two losing semi-finalists, Abdul Fahim Khan of Hong Kong and Low Ewe-Loong of Malaysia.

The women's bronze went to Singapore's Ma Li Lian and Lee Li Ling.

It is the first time squash was included in the Asian Games.

BANGKOK (AP) — Cigarette smoking, taboo at sports events in Europe and the United States, rages on at the Asian version of the Olympics — the Asian Games.

Coaches, managers, journalists and even athletes are seen smoking at swimming pool side, snooker games and boxing rings, and at cafes, disregarding Thai laws that bar smoking in any building.

Flight attendants on the national carrier Thai Airways make announcements before landing in Bangkok warning visitors not to smoke in buildings.

But at the non-smoking sporting arenas, smokers eagerly watch to see if anyone has lit a cigarette.

Once someone starts, others join in.

Thailand is one of the few countries where cigarette packs carry an extra warning stating that smoking can harm sex life.

All cigarette packs must carry the labels: "Smoking causes impotence" and "Smoking causes aging."

Multinational tobacco companies are marketing aggressively in Asia, looking to the region's vast young population to offset a loss of business in the West.

2nd Division Basketball Championship

Fuheis, Homentmen fight for second place tonight

By a Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Al Wihdat are expected to easily pass the 100-mark Sunday when they face lowly Samma in the fifth round of the Second Division Basketball Championship.

Last year's runner-up have won all their matches by a score of over 100 and are favoured to win the title this year.

In another match Sunday, second placed Fuheis face Homentmen in the fight for the only other qualifying berth to the First Division next year.

Al Wihdat are led by coach Ghaieth Al Najjar, who was previously at Al Ahli and have maintained the lead atop the eight-team event which concludes Dec. 25.

Playing in the Second Division for the second year, Al Wihdat beat Ebbin 117-48 in their last match.

Homentmen scored an easy 89-28 win over Samma in their last match but their undermanned team might have a tough time against Fuheis.

Formerly a First Division team, Homentmen are struggling to regain their place for the third year now, and need to win all their remaining matches to take the second slot to move back to the First Division.

Al Fuheis beat Ashrafieh 89-79 in

STANDINGS					
Team	P	W	L	SF	SA
Wihdat	4	4	-	437	214
Fuheis	4	4	-	319	246
Homentmen	4	3	1	278	247
Abu Nusair	4	1	3	254	289
Ashrafieh	4	1	3	235	288
Rayeh	4	1	3	212	263
Ebbin	3	1	2	158	238
Samma	3	-	3	80	188

Sunday's matches

Wihdat-Samma	5:00 p.m.	Sports Palace
Rayeh-Ebbin	6:30 p.m.	Sports Palace
Ashrafieh-Abu Nusair	5:00 p.m.	Hassan Sports City
Homentmen-Fuheis	6:00 p.m.	Terra Sancta

their last match, while Abu Nusair scored their first win 71-58 over Al Rayeh.

Two of the eight teams taking part in the Second Division will be promoted this year making the total number of First Division teams eight instead of six.

Missing from the event is Al Watani, a former First Division team who were relegated but failed to participate in the Second Division.

Also not playing are teams like

Gazet Hashem, Karak and Sahab.

The JBF this year organised only three other events: the First Division and the Under-14 won by Al Orthodoxi, and the Under-16 won by Al Jazireh.

The women's, juniors, and Under-22 were cancelled while the JBF is discussing holding the Under-18 with the concerned clubs.

The First Division includes Al Orthodoxi, Al Ahli, Al Jazireh, Al Jalil, Al Hussein and Al Jeel.

China gets green light for 2000 Grand Prix

HONG KONG (AFP) — China has been given the go-ahead to host a round of the 2000 Grand Prix in the southern city of Zhuhai, after being passed over in favour of Argentina for 1999, the Chinese track managers said Saturday.

Zhuhai International Circuit Management Ltd said in a statement received here that the delay would

give it time to improve facilities. "The additional construction work at the track which was already requested by Formula

One Administration is already underway, but we now have more time to ensure every aspect of the event will be 100 percent," spokesman Joe Lim said.

"Originally we were hop-

ing for a slot at the end of the year, so next March would have meant speeding things up considerably," he added.

World racing body, the International Automobile Federation (FIA) announced Friday that the March 28 race, due to have been held in Zhuhai, had been cancelled.

The race will now be held

in Buenos Aires, subject to an agreement being discussed between FIA and the Argentine organisers.

Zhuhai is building four more pit garages, relocating its control tower and improving road and media facilities to upgrade its circuit.



Pakistan's Muhammad Jameel, Abdul Rahim and Irfan Nawaz blocks the attack by Indian Joti Joseph during the second round of the Volleyball match at the 13th Asian Games. India beat Pakistan 15-4, 15-7, 15-11 (AFP Photo)

MITSUBISHI PAJERO FOR SALE

DUTY UNPAID
3,500cc, 1994 model, navy blue, 50,000 km, excellent condition, automatic, power windows, central lock, power steering, dual A/C, ABS, sunroof.
Please contact 079-523552

GROUND FLOOR FOR RENT

Complete ground floor with an area of 400 sq.m. Located around the 7th Circle.
Please call 5850774, Lawyer Naheel Miqudadi from 2-7 p.m.

Beit Al Bawadi
announces the opening of its
Christmas & Ramadan Exhibition.
Treat yourself and enjoy our unique
selection of Ceramics, Embroideries
Wall hangings and Rugs.
Telefax: 5930070-5925841
email: bawadi@nets.com.jo
Abdoun

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF
& TAMARA HIRSCH
01999 Telere Media Services, Inc

WEEKLY BRIDGE QUIZ

- Q1 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:
AKQ93 CAK QKQ5 AK108
What is your opening bid?
- Q2 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:
AA5 AKQ72 Q6 AAQ10854
The bidding has proceeded:
SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
1A Pass 1C Pass
What do you bid now?
- Q3 - Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:
AAK QAT542 Q94 AAK5
The bidding has proceeded:
SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
1A Pass 1C Pass
What do you bid now?
- Q4 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:
AA AKQ83 QK1083 AAK83
Further up the bidding will be over-ruled. What do you respond?
- Q5 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:
A105 CA943 Q52 49543
Partner opens the bidding with two no trump. What do you respond?
- Q6 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:
AK10876 AKQ32 Q6 4Q10
Partner opens the bidding with one no trump. What do you respond?

DUTY FREE CAR FOR SALE

SAAB 900S - 1996
MILEAGE: 47,000 KM
COLOR: BLUE METALIC
LEATHER INTERIOR - FULL OPTION
TEL: 5620923

FOR RENT

FURNISHED APARTMENTS IN WESTERN SHMEISANI
1) Area: 220 sq.m., second floor. Consists of 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, guest room, spacious living room, veranda, independent central heating, telephone, maid's room, modern equipped kitchen and luxurious furniture.
Annual Rent: JOD 6,000.
2) Area: 90 sq.m., first floor. Consists of 2 bedrooms, dining room and sitting room, bathroom, fully furnished kitchen, telephone, separate central heating, maid well, private garage, lift and extra outside door.
Annual Rent: JOD 3,500.
Please call between 4:00-8:00 p.m.
Tel: 5885711, 5679676 - Mobile: 079-523459

JORDAN TIMES
FAX: 5696183

Now Open
Retouche

**Pedicure
Manicure
Sugar
Wax
Body Massage**

Um Uthina - Sirriyeh Center
Tel. 5528251

Rana Int'l For Maintenance and Cargo Services

— We are specialised in cleaning & maintenance for all kinds of boilers & burners.
— Cleaning carpet, moquette and furniture sets.
— Packing, moving of cargo and furnitures.
— One year contract.
For more information, please call
Tel.: # (06) 5691048 (079) 508384

JOB OPPORTUNITY

A well-known Industrial Company is seeking to recruit suitable candidates for the following positions:

1 - Production Control Manager.

Required qualifications:
University degree in industrial engineering with at least 2 years experience in this field.

2 - Logistics clerk.

Required qualifications:
1 - High school degree in business administration.
2 - Very good command of English with experience in computer programs.

Please apply in writing with full career (c.v.) details, sending also a recent passport photo to:

P.O.Box (533) Abu Alanda (11592) Jordan.
Att: Administration Manager

- Excellent benefit package.
- One-month bonus salary yearly.
- Social Security.
- Medical Insurance.
- Provident fund scheme.
- Free transport from down town to site & back.

Stars and Stripes flutter over Bethlehem to await Clinton

BETHLEHEM (AFP) — The Stars and Stripes was hoisted alongside the Palestinian flag on the roof of Bethlehem's town hall on Saturday ahead of Tuesday's historic visit by U.S. President Bill Clinton.

"Clinton's visit is very important, and it is our duty to ensure its success," Bethlehem mayor Hanna Nasser told AFP.

The Stars and Stripes and the black, white, green and red Palestinian flags are flying on every electricity pole along the main street, and buildings have been plastered with posters of Clinton and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat.

One of the posters is a photograph showing Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat making a "V" for victory sign, and next to him a smiling Clinton, with his thumbs up.

Echoing the famous slogan of the assassinated U.S. civil rights campaigner and Nobel peace prize winner, Martin Luther King, the caption reads: "Welcome to

Bethlehem — We have a dream — Independence and Peace."

But the flags and posters cannot hide the fact that the town is a giant building site, as work goes on to prepare for the millennium celebrations, the "Bethlehem 2000" project.

Manger Square, the heart of the town, is still covered with piles of sand and rubble. Workers are frantically laying down paving stones, in the hope of completing the work by Christmas.

Elsewhere roads are being dug up, sewers repaired and water pipes laid down in an attempt to spruce up the somewhat run-down town centre. Hotels with a total of 500 beds are to be built to cater for what the town hopes will be an influx of tourists for the celebrations.

Just outside the Church of the Nativity, according to tradition the birthplace of Christ, three bawlers waylay a group of German tourists, trying to sell them traditional Palestinian scarves or keffiyehs, wooden statues of the Virgin Mary and postcards.

"Business is bad, very bad. There doesn't seem to be much enthusiasm about Clinton's visit," said hawker Samir Mitri, 37. "Clinton will be a tourist like any other, unless he does something noteworthy for the Palestinians."

Jacques Jiacaman, who owns a wood carving workshop making religious objects, is also despondent, saying sales are not even 10 percent of what they were last year.

He blames the downturn on the construction work that makes it hard for tourists to get around, and on Israel guides who point their tour groups in the direction of particular shops in exchange for fat commissions.

But mayor Nasser predicts that the millennium celebrations, starting at Christmas 1999 and lasting until Easter 2001, will be a period of prosperity for the town. At least three million visitors are expected.



TARAWNEH IN GAZA: Palestinian President Yasser Arafat welcomes Prime Minister Faysal Tarawneh on his arrival at Arafat's office in Gaza Strip on Saturday (Reuters photo)

Damascus meeting highlights split in Palestinian opposition

(Continued from page 1)

Congress spokesman Antis Sayegh called for elections not only for a rival Palestine National Council but also for a rival PLO Central Council, the PLO's second highest body which voted in Gaza City Thursday to delete clauses in the PLO Charter denying Israel's right to exist.

"We want to make the PLO a broad institution for the Palestinian people," Sayegh said, accusing Arafat of conducting a "defeatist policy."

The DFLP leader insisted that the congress, attended by representatives of all 10 opposition factions that advocate continued armed resistance to the Jewish state, respect the decisions of an opposition meeting held in the Gaza Strip Friday.

Friday's "national conference," which was attended by the four main opposition factions with support in the Palestinian territories, condemned the U.S.-brokered Wye River peace accord signed by Arafat in October but stopped short of calling for a rival PLO and left the door open to dialogue with

Arafat.

The hardliners wanted this weekend's congress to challenge Arafat directly by setting up a follow-up committee to act "as a Palestinian national leadership, whose task would be to resume the national struggle," participants said.

A Palestinian source who asked not to be named said the DFLP and its larger rival, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), were worried that the hardliners' plans would create a permanent split between the Palestinians in the territories and those in the Diaspora.

The two main PLO opposition factions have distanced themselves in recent months from the other eight opposition factions, including the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) and Islamic Jihad, who still form part of the Alliance of Palestinian Forces opposition umbrella group.

But PFLP number two Abu Ali Moustapha refused to take sides in the dispute Saturday calling for reconciliation in opposition ranks.

West Bank clashes continue just hours before Clinton arrival

(Continued from page 1)

Netanyahu claims virtually all the political detainees held by his government are either activist Islamists still opposed to peace or activists with "Israeli blood on their hands" — meo he refuses to release.

The Palestinians, backed tacitly by Washington, say barely 200 of the prisoners actually killed Israelis.

Clinton is expected to seek a compromise during his visit, although Netanyahu vowed repeatedly this week that he would not be swayed by U.S. pressure to release "murderers."

Clinton may also find difficulties during Monday's first-ever visit of a U.S. president to the Palestinian territories as Arafat stressed Saturday that there would be no vote on annulling anti-Israeli clauses in the Palestinian Charter, at a meeting that the U.S. president is to witness in person.

"We do not need to vote at all. We will implement

what we have agreed upon," Arafat told a press conference, responding to Netanyahu's call Friday for the PLO's parliament, the Palestinian National Council (PNC), to vote to annul sections of the charter calling for the destruction of Israel.

Although the PLO's second-highest body, the Central Council, voted Thursday to confirm deletion of the articles, Netanyahu told Israeli public radio: "It's a positive step, but not enough."

"We demand a real cancellation, by a vote with the participation of a sufficient number of PNC members, a procedure which will convince the whole world."

The Wye accord calls only for the PNC, which will meet in Clinton's presence Monday, to affirm the annulment of the clauses.

But Netanyahu said that if the body does not hold a formal vote, "there will without doubt be no three-way meeting" between himself, Clinton and Arafat.

At least four killed at bogus checkpoint in Algeria

ALGIERS (AFP) — Suspected Islamic extremists killed at least four people at a false checkpoint in the east Algerian district of Kabylie, press reports in the capital said Saturday.

The reports said a break-away unit of the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), dressed as gendarmes, carried out the attack Wednesday evening near Dra Al Mizan, some 40 kilometres from the eastern town of Tizi Ousou.

Some reports said eight people had been killed. They included two police-

meo and two soldiers.

Over recent weeks in Kabylie, where almost every village has its own self-defence unit, attacks and killings have become more frequent and target in particular security forces.

A former army major was murdered in Tizi Ousou on Nov. 14 and three policemen were killed by a bomb in the town on Nov. 29.

The group which carried out Wednesday's attack had reportedly ordered the population to observe a curfew after 6:00 p.m. local time, warning violators would be

massacred.

Meanwhile, the daily Al Acil reported the discovery of the bodies of 10 women kidnapped Tuesday night during the massacre of at least 52 people in an isolated community near Tadjenia in the Dahra highlands near Chief, some 200 kilometres west of Algiers.

The women's throats had been slit, the paper said.

Al Khabar, another newspaper, said a GIA leader, Djilali Saim, was killed Friday in the southwestern town of Mascara, where security forces found a

bomb factory on Thursday.

Also Saturday, the daily L'Authentique reported that the remains of some 64 people had been removed from the site of the massacre in the Meftah region, about 20 kilometres south of Algiers.

Civil protection agents began investigations in the area about two weeks ago, following a confession from a Muslim fighter who reportedly repented.

The bodies of massacred people are thought to have been hurled down wells between 1993 and 1995.

It is hard to estimate the

number of victims in the so-called "triangle of death" area because skulls are rarely found. Firemen have been pulling hoes out of the wells and it is too easy to reconstitute complete skeletons.

Muslim extremists began their uprising after the January 1992 cancellation of general elections the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was set to win. Since then, estimates of the number of lives lost have ranged from 30,000 to 100,000.

Ocalan softens resignation comments

ROME (R) — Kurdish rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan was quoted on Saturday as saying he would be prepared to step down as head of the Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) only if it would bring about the decisive change he felt it needed.

Italian news agency AGI said Ocalan, who was arrested in Rome a month ago, clarified remarks he made to the communist newspaper Il Manifesto in which he had appeared to be on the brink of resigning from the party he founded in 1978.

"I simply meant to say that I came to Italy to begin a peace process... In order to lead to concrete results a radical change is needed in the PKK's capacity for political intervention," AGI quoted him as saying.

It said that in order to achieve that, Ocalan said he would be willing to step aside at a forthcoming PKK congress. "But let us understand each other:

only in the sense that such a gesture of mine would contribute to success in the process of change."

Ocalan made similar comments in an interview with the German news weekly Der Spiegel released ahead of publication on Monday.

"Power in the party must be more widely spread, it must not be concentrated entirely in my hands. I could even resign as chairman. That would give me a chance to redefine my role."

Turkey has branded Ocalan, its most wanted criminal, a "terrorist" responsible for more than 29,000 deaths caused by the conflict between Kurd fighters and Turkish forces during the PKK's 14-year-long struggle for self-rule in the southeast.

Ocalan told Der Spiegel he could accept federalism. "But to achieve that the political and military leadership in Turkey must recognise the identity of the Kurds," he said.

Ocalan was arrested in Rome a month ago after flying from Moscow on a false passport. Italy has rejected Turkey's demand for extradition because its constitution forbids handing over suspects to a country where they could face the death penalty.

Germany has an arrest warrant for Ocalan but has decided not to request extradition. Italy wants him tried but would prefer not to do so itself. Ocalan wants political asylum.

"I don't see who else's problem he is but Italy's," outspoke Italian European Commissioner Emma Bonino told reporters in Venice on Saturday. "We arrested him."

Ocalan told Der Spiegel he would in principle be in favour of being tried before an international tribunal. "But in that case, the misdemeanours of both sides would have to be examined. I am against a court being set up just to try Ocalan," he said.

Clock chimes Saddam's song — 24 times a day

BAGHDAD (AP) — As the clock in the 50-metre tower began chiming the tune from a popular anthem to President Saddam Hussein, a group of visiting schoolgirls provided the words.

"There is a covenant between us and you," the girls recited dutifully — a line from the song familiar to almost all 22 million Iraqis.

The Baghdad clock tower, with its seven exhibition halls, gold-plated statues of falcons and many portraits of Saddam, plays the song on the hour 24 times a day.

Until now, the paeon to Saddam could only be heard within a five-kilometre radius of the tower.

But that will soon change, on Saddam's orders.

Engineers are working to link the chimes to air raid siren speakers so that all of Baghdad's five million people can hear the tune around the clock.

"The basic idea is that the chimes of this clock should be heard all over Baghdad. Work is in progress, and we expect it to finish soon," said Waleed Hummadi, director of the Baghdad Clock, one of the capital's main landmarks.

Work on the monument started in 1986 but stopped after Iraq's 1990 invasion of neighbouring Kuwait, which triggered the Gulf war. Construction resumed in 1992 after Iraq's defeat, and the three-storey building with the tower atop it was completed in 1996.

Schools arrange visits to the site, whose entrance is adorned with gold-plated inscriptions of Saddam telling of his pride that the tower was built despite a lack of funds, a shortage caused by sanctions the United Nations imposed on Iraq after the Kuwait invasion.

Everything in the monument celebrates or pertains to the president's life and deeds.

"Those four rifles waving with the pendulum are made of pure gold and belong to four martyrs who fell in defence of Iraq in the Iraqi-Iran war," said Mohammad Zuheir, a guide. In fact, the

rifles were real weapons plated in gold for display at the tower.

For the hundreds of girls and boys touring the Baghdad Clock, a visit echoes what textbooks say about their leader. Documents written in blood hang on the walls and tell the children about the loyalty Iraqis across the nation feel toward Saddam.

"We bring them here to prove to our pupils how the people love their president," said a teacher, Muna Kadhim.

Students Rusa Al Shami and Taghrid Al Asam stood spellbound in front of statements Saddam wrote by hand during the Gulf war.

"See the changes he makes and the sentences he crosses out. It tells about the president's psychology during that time," said the guide, Zuheir.

The exhibition halls are packed with gifts that Iraqis and foreigners are said to have sent to Saddam on his birthday each April 28. The booty includes medals, jewelry, gold, silver, embalmers and animals, crystal, porcelain, chess sets and copies of the Koran.

"We haven't heard or read that any president in the world is offered so many gifts as ours," said Hummadi, the monument's director.

Among the most interesting gifts is a piece of pottery that U.S. Energy Secretary Bill Richardson — who railed against Saddam as U.S. ambassador to the United Nations — presented during a 1995 visit to secure the release of two Americans jailed in Iraq.

"The Baghdad Clock is like an open book for the visitors to illustrate how loyal the people are to their president and also show his standing on both Arab and foreign levels," Hummadi said.

He has another plan for Iraqis to show their fealty to Saddam. Once the clock's chimes are audible all over Baghdad, Hummadi hopes to arrange for them to sound their paeon via air raid siren speakers throughout the entire country.

Pilot banned for singing Flintstones theme

THE HAGUE (AP) — Fred and Wilma and the gang would be proud. A Dutch pilot and flight school instructor was unjustly banned from an airport in the northern Netherlands for continually singing the theme to "The Flintstones" over his radio, an appeals court ruled Friday.

Wim de Nij, better known in Holland as Captain Flintstone, had taken his case to the Dutch Council of State after the airport in the northern city of Groningen had forbidden him from taking off or landing there from March 1996 to July 1997.

Female 'Viagra' Rape Squad at work in London

LONDON (AFP) — A man had to be rescued by police after he was bound and gagged in a hotel bedroom and forced to have sex with a woman, according to a report by the "Viagra Rape Squad," it was claimed Saturday.

The Sun tabloid related how "two stunning blondes" picked up a businessman at a nightclub in London and offered him a threesome. But once in a hotel room in west London, the man chained the 25-year-old to a bed, taped his mouth and forced him to have sex with them, the Sun said.

Twins win German beauty contest

VOGELSBERG (AFP) — When Vogelsberg held a beauty contest, the panel of judges was unable to choose between Mandy and Nicole, both 18 and dazzlingly beautiful. So the judges picked both, and Vogelsberg is sending a dual entry to the Miss Germany contest in Trier on Jan. 13.

Mandy and Nicole — twin sisters — said they were surprised by the decision and claimed their intention of winning the national crown was still intact.

Prince August fired for hitting cameraman

HANNOVER (AFP) — Prince Ernst August of Hannover was fined \$8,000 on Friday for breaking a cameraman's nose with an umbrella in January. The prince had struck journalist Karsten Thuermer who was trying to film him and his fiancée Princess Caroline of Monaco as they returned home from a charity gala in this northern German city. At a previous hearing the court accepted that the prince spent all his time "being watched by the media" and under pressure from journalists, but on Friday the judges ruled that the attack was illegal and pre-meditated. Thuermer suffered a broken nose, cuts to his head and concussion.

Leaning Pisa tower gets steel braces

PISA (AFP) — The 627-year-old leaning tower of Pisa, closed to the public since 1990 because of the risk of collapse, was wearing a set of new steel braces Saturday, designed to hold it steady during a long excavation. The excavation will be aimed at tilting the tower back to vertical so its inclination will eventually be only 10 per cent of what it is now. "We want to stabilize the tower for at least 300 years," said Michele Jamiolkowski, head of the committee charged with safeguarding the tower, built as a symbol of the power of the Maritime Republic of Pisa during the Middle Ages.

Britons arrested in Spain with 1,200 kilos of hashish

BAZA (AFP) — Spanish police arrested two Britons transporting 1,200 kilos of hashish in a van in this southern Spanish city, police said Saturday. The drugs, hidden in a cargo of tyres, were seized Thursday during a vehicle check on a highway 75 kilometres northeast of Granada.

Israeli jets br barrier o

BETHLEHEM (AFP) — Israeli jets were seen on Saturday flying over the town of Bethlehem, where U.S. President Bill Clinton is expected to arrive Tuesday for the millennium celebrations.

The jets were seen flying over the town of Bethlehem, where U.S. President Bill Clinton is expected to arrive Tuesday for the millennium celebrations.

Israeli teenager killed by Gulf war landmine

BAGHDAD (AFP) — An Israeli teenager was killed Saturday by a landmine in the northern city of Haifa, a source close to the Israeli army said Saturday.

The teenager, 15 years old, was walking in a park in Haifa when he stepped on a landmine. He was killed instantly.

Two injured by landmines in Egypt

CAIRO (AFP) — A child and a woman were injured Saturday by landmines in the northern city of Matruh, a source close to the Egyptian army said Saturday.

The child, 10 years old, was walking in a field when he stepped on a landmine. He was injured.

Violence in Toulouse after youth gunned down by police

TOULOUSE (AFP) — Six people were injured Saturday in violence broke out in a suburb of the southwestern French town of Toulouse, after a youth was gunned down by police overnight.

The first violence erupted in the late afternoon, when about a hundred young people in the neighbourhoods of St. Pierre and St. Julien set fire to local police stations and shops.

Egyptian MPs make landmark visit to Iran

CAIRO (AFP) — An Egyptian parliamentary delegation flew to Iran on Saturday for the first visit of its kind since diplomatic relations were severed 20 years ago, airport officials said.

The three-man delegation will attend a meeting of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) aimed at creating an Islamic parliament.

Britons arrested in Spain with 1,200 kilos of hashish

BAZA (AFP) — Spanish police arrested two Britons transporting 1,200 kilos of hashish in a van in this southern Spanish city, police said Saturday. The drugs, hidden in a cargo of tyres, were seized Thursday during a vehicle check on a highway 75 kilometres northeast of Granada.